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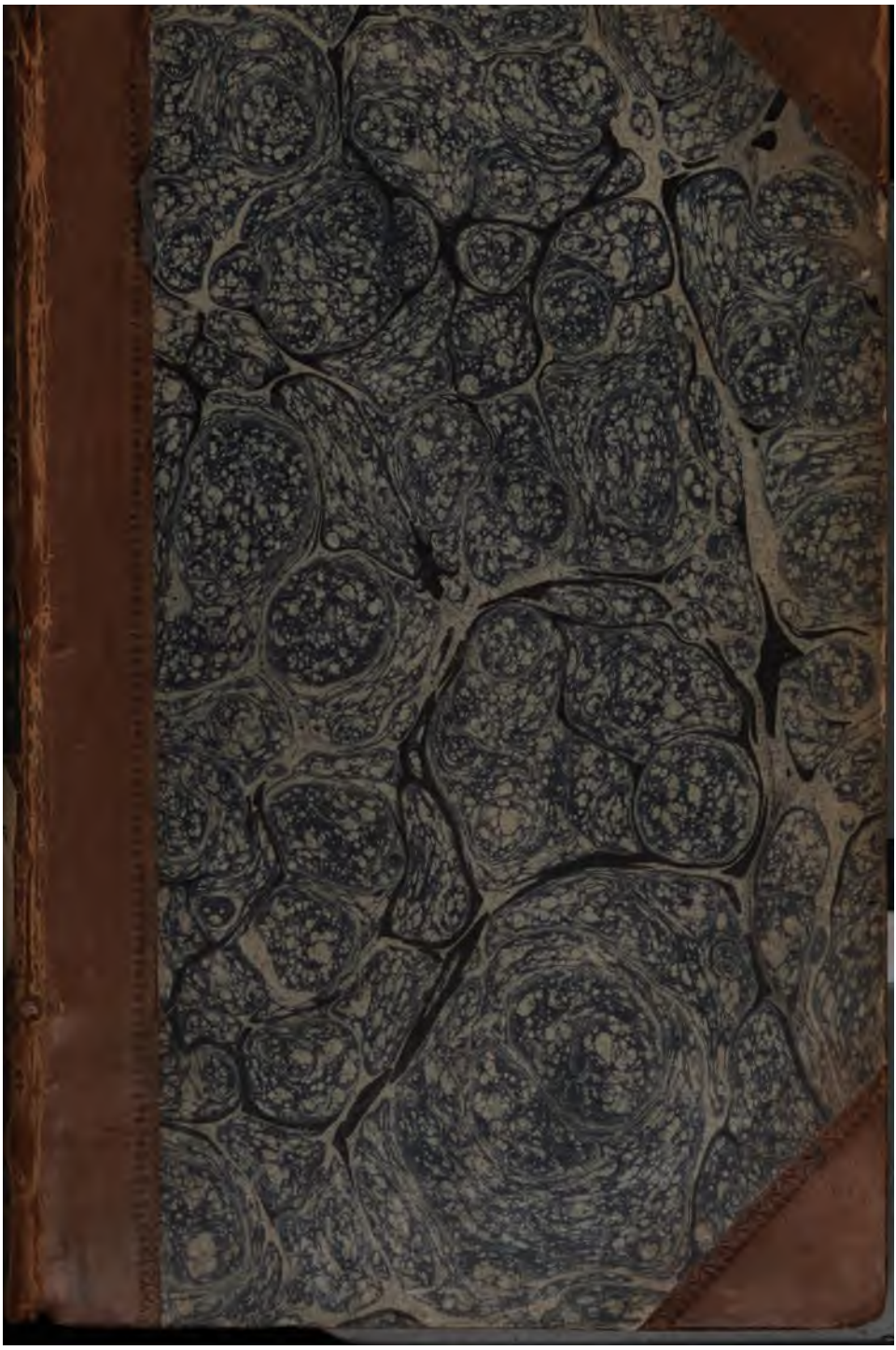

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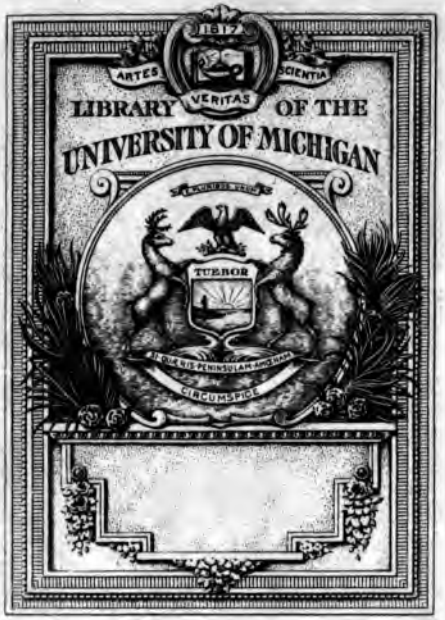
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TWO LETTERS,

CONTAINING

I. An ENQUIRY concerning Church Diſcipline: In which is ſhewn what Rules and Directions Chriſt and his Apoſtles have given with relation thereto.

In a LETTER to the Reverend Dr. *Stebbing*.

II. An ENQUIRY concerning Covenants: Wherein the new, or Chriſtian, Covenant is particularly conſidered.

In a LETTER to the Reverend Dr. *Waterland*.

To which is added,

A DEFENCE of PROTESTANTISM: In Anſwer to *The modeſt Plea for Popery*.

Offered to the Conſideration of thoſe whom Papiſts have ſeduc'd, or are endeavouring to draw over to their Religion.

By *THO. CHUBB.*

LONDON:

Printed for J. NOON, at the *White-Hart*, near *Mercers-Chapel*, in *Cheapſide*. MDCCXXXVI.

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AN

ENQUIRY

CONCERNING

Church-Diſcipline:

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A N

ENQUIRY

CONCERNING

CHURCH-DISCIPLINE.

Reverend Sir,

THE reaſon why I addreſs my ſelf to you in this enquiry is, becauſe it is a queſtion which you ſeem to be in a particular and ſpecial manner intereſted in; and therefore I think it may fairly be preſumed, you will think it concerns you carefully to examine it. As Church-Diſcipline has contributed much to, or at leaſt has been a plauſible pretext for, a great deal of that cruelty and barbarity which has been exerciſed by men profeſſing Chriſtianity towards each other, ſo this ren-

ders

ders it neceſſary to be enquired into, whether ſuch Church-Diſcipline as is contended for has any foundation in the Chriſtian revelation, that is, in that revelation of God's will which Chriſt hath delivered to the world for Chriſtians to direct and govern their affections and behaviour by. For as Chriſt himſelf laid the foundation of Chriſtian Societies, ſo ſurely thoſe rules and directions which he hath given concerning them ought to be regarded and followed in all ſucceeding ages: and therefore the firſt and main point to be enquired into is, What Chriſt has ſaid, and what rules and directions he has given touching this matter. And in order to do this, we muſt conſult the hiſtory of Chriſt's life and miniſtry, or thoſe writings which contain the ſeveral rules and directions that he hath given with regard to Chriſtian Societies and Church-Diſcipline; and which I think are as follow.

FIRST, in the parable of the tares of the field, *Matthew* xiii. from verſe 23 to verſe 31. *Another parable put he forth unto them, ſaying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man which ſowed good ſeed in his field; but whilſt men ſlept his enemy came and ſowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was ſprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares alſo. So the ſervants of the houſholder came and ſaid unto him, Sir, Didſt not thou ſow good ſeed in thy field; from whence then hath it tares?*

He

He ſaid unto them, An enemy hath done this. The ſervants ſaid unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he ſaid, Nay, leſt whilſt ye gather up the tares ye root up alſo the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harveſt; and in the time of harveſt I will ſay to the reapers, Gather ye together firſt the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn. This parable is explained from verſe 35. to verſe 44. *Then Jeſus ſent the multitude away, and went into the houſe, and his Diſciples came unto him, ſaying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He anſwered and ſaid unto them, He that ſoweth the good ſeed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good ſeed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one: the enemy that ſowed them is the Devil; the harveſt is the end of the world, and the reapers are the Angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire, ſo ſhall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man ſhall ſend forth his Angels, and they ſhall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire: there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth. Then ſhall the righteous ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.* By the the kingdom of heaven in this place I think is plainly intended the goſpel diſpenſation,

or that kingdom of the Meſſiah, in which the conſciences and behaviour of men ſhould be directed and governed by thoſe rules and principles of action, which Chriſt revealed to, and ſet before, them. Chriſt, conſidered as the governour of his people, laid down certain doctrinal propoſitions, which, becauſe of their great importance to mankind, are called the *good news*, or the *goſpel*. Theſe propoſitions, when believed and ſeriouſly regarded, become ſuch a ſpring and principle of action in men, as to reform their vices, and rightly to direct and govern their minds and lives. And thoſe upon whom they have this effect are in this parable called *good ſeed*, and *wheat*, and *the children of the kingdom*. But as the beſt things are liable to be perverted and abuſed, and made ſubſervient to other and contrary purpoſes than what they were intended for; ſo Chriſt foreſaw and foretold that it would be the caſe here. Many, who would profeſs to be the ſubjects of Chriſt's kingdom, would not be governed by his laws, would not frame and faſhion their minds and lives after his example, nor agreeably to thoſe rules and principles of action which he had ſet before them and recommended to them; and others, to anſwer vile purpoſes to themſelves, would ſo cut, mangle, and torture his goſpel, and would mix and blend ſuch other and falſe propoſitions with it, as that, inſtead of its being in men a ſpring and principle of virtue and goodneſs, it would become

become to many an occaſion or a pretext to vice and wickedneſs. And thoſe perſons, by whom the deſign of the goſpel is thus perverted, and upon whom the end of it is not anſwered, tho' they call Chriſt *Lord*, and call themſelves his followers; tho' they are mixed in the ſame ſociety with his faithful people, and are called by his name; yet, ſtrictly ſpeaking, they are not the true ſubjects nor children of Chriſt's kingdom, but are tares which ſpring up among, and are mixed with, the wheat; they are the children of the wicked one, they are ſuch in Chriſt's kingdom who offend and do iniquity. And as Chriſt foreſaw and foretold that this would be the caſe under the goſpel diſpenſation, that is, that there would be this mixture of tares and wheat in his kingdom; the queſtion is, What has he ordered to be done with reſpect to it? Has he appointed, and thereby authorized, thoſe who are ſet apart to watch over Chriſtian Societies for their good, or, in other words, the Clergy, wholly to exclude by a judicial act of excommunication from their reſpective Societies all ſuch corrupted members as aforeſaid, or at leaſt all that appear to them to be ſo; and thereby to make a total ſeparation betwixt the tares and the wheat? The anſwer is, That he has not appointed any ſuch thing, but on the contrary he ſeems rather to have ſtrictly forbidden it. For when the ſervants ſaid to their maſter, *Wilt*

thou then that we go and gather them (*viz.* the tares) *up? he* (*viz.* Chriſt, who is there repreſented under the character of an houſholder) *ſaid, Nay.* Which is the ſame as if he had ſaid, This muſt not be done, or I forbid this to be done. And then he aſſigned the reaſon for this prohibition, or why ſuch a ſeparation ſhould not be made: *Leſt whilſt ye gather up the tares, ye root up alſo the wheat with them.* Which is as much as if he had ſaid, I ſtrictly forbid that any ſuch power be exerciſed, or any ſuch ſeparation be made in my kingdom, becauſe of the very bad effects which will attend it; for what through the weakneſs of ſome, and the wickedneſs of others, it would be the wheat more than the tares that would be the ſufferers thereby. The remedy in this caſe would be much worſe than the diſeaſe. Men, fallible men, who are liable to be ignorant, weak, partial, paſſionate, and the like, and who are likewiſe liable to be biaſſed and governed by corrupt views of intereſt or otherways, are by no means to be truſted with ſuch a power, becauſe we may be aſſured it will be greatly abuſed. My faithful ſervants would ſuffer much more by the exerciſe of it, than they would do by the aforeſaid mixture; and therefore, upon theſe grounds, I ſtrictly forbid that any ſuch power be aſſumed or exerciſed by or among my people. On the contrary, it is my will that the tares and the

wheat,

wheat, the good and bad ſubjects in my kingdom, ſhould grow or be mixed together in the ſame ſociety, until the time of harveſt, the day of judgment; and then I will appoint their ſeparation. And as this is an affair in which the quiet and happineſs of my faithful people are greatly intereſted, and by which they may be great ſufferers, therefore I deſire and expect, that what I have here ſaid may carefully be attended to and followed: *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.* This ſeems to be the ſenſe and the deſign of the parable. For tho' the field is ſaid to be the world (that is, the people) as Chriſt's kingdom ſubſiſts in it, and his ſubjects are gathered out of it; yet as it is not the world (or people at large) but Chriſt's kingdom (or thoſe who are gathered out of, and ſeparated from, the world by profeſſing their ſubjection to Chriſt) which this parable of the tares of the field is likened to; ſo conſequently it is not only in the world, but alſo in Chriſt's kingdom, that the tares and the wheat muſt be ſuffered to grow together. And accordingly the Angels are to gather out of, not the world, but Chriſt's kingdom, all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. Beſides, as they are the ſervants of Chriſt, who in this parable are repreſented as deſiring or asking Chriſt that he would inveſt them with the power of excommunication; ſo they are thoſe very ſervants of Chriſt, who are by him prohibited the

uſe of it. And therefore, whatever character thoſe ſervants may be ſuppoſed to bear in Chriſt's kingdom, or whatever capacity they may be ſuppoſed to act in; whether they be ſuch as are appointed to watch over Chriſtian Societies for their good, or whether they be ſuch as are inveſted with civil power; theſe, conſidered as the ſervants and miniſters of Chriſt's kingdom, are here by him, *viz.* Chriſt their maſter, plainly and expreſsly forbidden to aſſume and exerciſe any ſuch power. And indeed the experience of after-ages has abundantly ſhewn the fitneſs of the forementioned prohibition, and the juſtneſs of the reaſon upon which it is grounded. Sad and terrible have the effects of the excommunicating power been to many of the faithful ſervants of Chriſt. So that the wheat, *viz.* the true ſubjects of Chriſt's kingdom, have ſuffered much more by it, than Chriſtianity could poſſibly have ſuffered from the non-exerciſe of that power. And tho' many reaſons may be aſſigned for the making a ſeparation of the tares from the wheat in Chriſt's kingdom, yet as thoſe reaſons, or the good propoſed by ſuch a ſeparation, would not be a balance to the much greater evil which would attend the exerciſe of ſuch power, therefore Chriſt ſeems here to forbid the uſe of it.

HERE, Sir, I beg you would pleaſe to obſerve, that the rule or direction before *laid down*, with regard to Chriſtian Societies

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and Church-Diſcipline, was given by Chriſt himſelf, of whom I think it may fairly be preſumed, that he was a proper judge of its fitneſs, and of the juſtneſs of the reaſon upon which it is founded; and therefore if Chriſt did in the rule above mentioned forbid the excluding wicked men from Chriſtian Societies by excommunication, (which ſeems to be the caſe) then if St. *Paul*, or an Angel from Heaven, ſhould have laid down any rules and directions that are contrary to theſe, (which I think has not been the caſe) we are not to receive them; *Galatians* i. 8. But then it may be asked, What, muſt good and bad men be eſteemed and treated alike among Chriſtians? Muſt there be no diſtinction or diſcrimination made betwixt thoſe, who make the goſpel of Chriſt the governing principle of their affections and actions, and thoſe, who, tho' they profeſs it, yet will not be influenced nor governed by it; or thoſe, who pervert and abuſe it to anſwer vile purpoſes to themſelves? Muſt theſe conſider and treat each other as fellow-members in the ſame body? This leads me to enquire what rules and directions Chriſt hath given with relation hereto; and which are,

SECONDLY, *Matt.* xviii. 15, 16, 17, 18. *Moreover, if thy brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he ſhall hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee* one or two more,

more, that in the mouth of two or three witneſſes every word may be eſtabliſhed. And if he ſhall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he ſhall neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a Publican. Verily, I ſay unto you, Whatſoever ye ſhall bind on earth ſhall be bound in heaven, and whatſoever ye ſhall looſe on earth ſhall be looſed in heaven. Here we ſee how one Chriſtian is to behave towards another, when that other has treſpaſſed againſt him (or when he knows that the other has acted wrong and unworthy of his Chriſtian profeſſion in any other inſtance,* the reaſon for ſuch behaviour being the ſame in any other caſe) *viz.* he is to tell him his fault; that is, he is to endeavour to make him ſenſible of the vileneſs and wickedneſs of the action, and to repreſent to him what will be the conſequence of his obſtinate continuance in it, or of his repentance and reformation from it; and he is to do this betwixt himſelf and his offending brother alone, thereby to prevent, if poſſible, the blaſting his brother's character. *If he ſhall hear thee,* that is, if he is brought to repentance

* Tho' the caſe, which Chriſt inſtances in, be only that of private injuries, yet as the end to be anſwered by the admonition is not ſo much the repairing of the injury, as the reforming the offender, (*if he ſhall hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother*) therefore whenever ſuch admonition becomes a proper means towards anſwering the ſame end, then it is equally as reaſonable; and conſequently it is as much the *duty of Chriſtians* and Chriſtian Societies to admoniſh in all *ſuch caſes, as in the* caſe referred to.

tance and reformation by thy means, *thou haſt gained thy brother*, that is, thou haſt recovered him out of his apoſtaſy from Chriſt, thou haſt looſed him from the bonds of ſin wherewith he was bound, and from that condemnation or juſt diſpleaſure of God which his ſin had bound him over to, and haſt brought him back again to his duty and allegiance to Chriſt. *But if he will not hear thee*, that is, if he is not brought to repentance by this means, then thou muſt not reſt ſatisfied with having admoniſhed him thy ſelf, but muſt make uſe of every other proper means to bring him to repentance and reformation; thou muſt *take with thee one or two more*, to join with thee in a ſecond admonition, that ſuch admonition, when coming from ſeveral perſons, may, if poſſible, make the deeper impreſſion upon him. *And if he ſhall neglect to hear them, then tell it to the Church*, that is, to the Chriſtian Society of which he is a member, that they may join in a third admonition. *But if he ſhall neglect to hear the Church*, if he ſhall obſtinately perſiſt in his wickedneſs after all proper means have been uſed to reclaim him, *then let him be to thee* (and to every other Chriſtian, the reaſon being the ſame to every one) *as an heathen man and a Publican*. Here it is to be obſerved, that our Lord did not ſay, Let him be to the Church, but only *let him be to thee*, as an heathen man and a Publican. So that the direction given

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by Chriſt was not to the Church conſidered as a Body or Society, but it was to each member thereof conſidered in his private capacity. And therefore the thing to be enquired into is not, how a Synagogue or Society of *Jews*, conſidered in their collective capacity, behaved towards an Heathen or a Publican; but only how each *Jew* in his private capacity behaved towards them. And tho' a man, who profeſſes himſelf a Chriſtian, does by his treſpaſſing againſt his brother, or by his being guilty of any other vicious action, and by his obſtinately perſiſting in it after all proper means have been uſed to reclaim him, ſhew or prove himſelf to be an unworthy member of Chriſt's Church, (as every tree is known and proved to be what it is by its fruit) and tho' ſuch a behaviour may juſtify the particular Society of which ſuch a man is a member, ſo far to cenſure him as to declare thus much of him, *viz.* that he is an unworthy member of Chriſt's Church; yet as in this caſe there is no judicial authority aſſumed or exerciſed, ſo neither is this what our Lord required ſhould be done in the rule before laid down. The direction is, *Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a Publican*; that is, let him be to thee, with regard to thy eſteem for him and thy behaviour towards him in thy private capacity, as an *Heathen* and a *Publican* is to a *Jew*, or as either of theſe would be to thee conſidering thy ſelf as a *Jew*. The Heathens

thens were no part of the Brotherhood among the *Jews*. And tho' the Publicans came under the denomination of *Jews* by their profeſſing the *Jewiſh* religion, yet as they were employed by the *Romans* in gathering the taxes which the *Roman* government laid upon the *Jewiſh* nation, and which the *Jews* conſidered as a great oppreſſion, and likewiſe conſidered the Publicans as greatly criminal by their employment in joining with the *Romans* in that oppreſſion, ſo they each one in his private capacity eſteemed and behaved towards thoſe Publicans, not as if they were *Jews* or parts of their Brotherhood, but as if they were aliens and not *Jews*. This then ſeems to be the rule laid down by Chriſt, which his Diſciples and Followers are to be guided by, *viz.* that when one Chriſtian treſpaſſeth againſt another, or is guilty of any other piece of wickedneſs, then the guilty perſon is to be admoniſhed over and over in order to his reformation. But if he ſhall perſiſt in his wickedneſs after all proper means have been uſed to reclaim him, then the Chriſtian Brotherhood, each one in his private capacity, are to eſteem him and behave towards him not as a Chriſtian Brother, but as if he were not a Chriſtian, tho' he ſtill profeſs himſelf to be ſo. And as Chriſtian admonition conſiſts in repreſenting to men the vileneſs and wickedneſs of their actions, and the conſequences which will unavoidably

follow either their obſtinately perſiſting in them, or their repentance and reformation from them; that the former binds them over to God's juſt diſpleaſure and future puniſhment, and the latter looſes them from that band, and reſtores them to God's favour; ſo Chriſt aſſures us that this is what God will moſt certainly abide by: For whatever is thus bound on earth ſhall be bound in heaven, and whatſoever is thus looſed on earth ſhall be looſed in heaven. But then it is to be remember'd, that when the blameable perſon's fault is to be reported according to the directions given by Chriſt, the report is not to be made to the Parſon, Biſhop, or Overſeer of the Chriſtian Society to which he belongeth, but it is to the Society itſelf: *Tell it to the Church.* So likewiſe he is to be admoniſhed by the Church, *but if he neglect to hear the Church*, &c. And ſuppoſing the Biſhop or Paſtor of the Church to be the immediate miniſter of this admonition, yet it is not to be conſidered as his act, but as the act of the Church, he being no more than the miniſter or repreſentative of the congregation in this action. And

HERE, I think, it will be proper to obſerve, that as Chriſt laid the foundation for Chriſtian Societies, that is, he laid the foundation for a religious ſect that would be called after his name, as taking their riſe from him; ſo he did this not barely to found *ſuch a ſect*, or engage men in ſuch a profeſſion,

feſſion, or that they might join together in publick worſhip, and thereby preſerve and keep up the publick profeſſion of his religion in the world; but alſo, and more eſpecially, that they might be united together by a ſtrong friendſhip and brotherly affection, and thereby be led to be companions for, help-mates to, and watchers over each other for their good, to bear one another's burthens, ſympathize with, and comfort one another under the various afflictions and perſecutions they might meet with in and from the world; and, by a good example, provoke one another to love and good works. This was that great bond of union which Chriſt propoſed that his diſciples and followers ſhould be held together by, and by which they ſhould be known to the world: *By this ſhall all men know that ye are my (viz.* Chriſt's) *diſciples, if ye have love one to another*, John xiii. 35. So that men profeſſing Chriſtianity may be united in the ſame Society with others in one reſpect, and yet be ſhut out of, or be no part of, that Society in another reſpect; that is, a man may be united to a Chriſtian Society by profeſſing the ſame religious principles, and joining with them in the ſame acts of worſhip, and yet he may have no part nor lot in the Chriſtian brotherhood; the reſt of the members of that Society may each one, in his private capacity, ſhut him out of his company, have no ſociety or friendſhip with

him, but eſteem him, and behave towards him, not as a Chriſtian brother, but as a vicious and wicked man, and as if he were not a Chriſtian. And in that reſpect he would be put out from among them, he would be put away and avoided by them, he would be ſhut out of, and would be no part of, that Society. And this is what our Lord ſeems to intend with reſpect to ſuch Chriſtians (or rather ſuch perſons who profeſs Chriſtianity) who perſiſt in their wickedneſs after all proper means have been uſed to reclaim them. Such perſons may, if they pleaſe, continue to profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, and may attend Chriſtian Aſſemblies when they pay their publick acknowledgments to God, Chriſt having commanded the Chriſtian brotherhood to permit and ſuffer them ſo to do for the reaſon before mentioned. But then they are to be ſo far ſhut out of that brotherhood, as that the reſt of the Society, each one in his private capacity, are to ſhun and avoid them, and to have no ſociety or friendſhip with them. They muſt be to each of the Chriſtian brotherhood as a Heathen or a Publican would be to a *Jew*.

THUS, Sir, from a view of the two paſſages of ſcripture which I have before recited, I think it plainly appears, what thoſe rules and directions are which Chriſt hath given, and what kind of diſcipline he hath *appointed ſhould* take place in Chriſtian Societies,

cieties, with regard to ſuch wicked perſons who act unworthily and unſuitably to their Chriſtian Profeſſion (whether their fault be called hereſy, or whatever name it may be diſtinguiſhed by, it being not the name, but the thing or blameable action, which comes into the preſent queſtion) *viz.* they are to be admoniſhed again and again in order to their reformation: And if they perſiſt in their wickedneſs after all proper means have been uſed to reclaim them, then each Chriſtian, in his private capacity, muſt eſteem them, and behave towards them, not as Chriſtian brethren, but as vicious and wicked men, and as if they were not Chriſtians. This is the excommunication, if it may be ſo called, which Chriſt hath appointed ſhould take place in his kingdom. But then here it muſt ſtop, Chriſt not having delegated any power or authority to Chriſtian Societies, much leſs to the Clergy, to proceed any farther; but, on the contrary, he hath forbidden that ſuch excommunication, as conſiſts in caſting men wholly out of the church, ſhould be exerciſed in his kingdom. It is one thing to exclude a wicked man out of the Chriſtian brotherhood, by each Chriſtian's ſhunning and avoiding the company and friendſhip of ſuch a man; and it is another thing for a Chriſtian Society, or any leader thereof, by a judicial act, wholly to exclude ſuch a man from that Society, and caſt him out of the Church. The former

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of theſe Chriſt hath required; the latter, upon juſt and good grounds, he hath forbidden; or at leaſt this ſeems to be the caſe. And

As Chriſt appointed that Chriſtians and Chriſtian Societies ſhould behave as above towards ſuch wicked perſons who profeſs Chriſtianity, but whoſe lives are not influenced and governed by it; ſo agreeably hereto are the advices given by his Apoſtles to Chriſtians, and to the Chriſtian Societies which were gathered in their times. Thus St. *Paul* adviſed the Chriſtians at *Rome*, *Romans* xvi. 17, 18. *Now I beſeech you, brethren, mark them which cauſe diviſions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are ſuch ſerve not our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but their own belly, and by good words and fair ſpeeches deceive the hearts of the ſimple.* Here we ſee that thoſe wicked men St. *Paul* refers to were to be avoided, Chriſtians were not to keep them company, or have any friendſhip with them; but then here is no authority to be aſſumed in the caſe, no judicial act of excommunication to take place, by which ſuch wicked men were to be wholly cut off from the body of Chriſt. Again, St. *Paul* gives the ſame charge to the *Corinthian* Chriſtians, 1 *Cor.* v. 11. *But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if a man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard,*

drunkard, or an extortioner; with ſuch an one no not to eat. This is repeated at verſe 13, and applied to the inceſtuous perſon: *Therefore put away from among yourſelves that wicked perſon.* Theſe words, *put away from among yourſelves*, though they are very ſtrong expreſſions, yet by a fair conſtruction can ſignify no more, than that they ſhould ſhun and avoid the company and friendſhip of the perſon referred to; that they ſhould, each in his private capacity, ſhut him out of the Chriſtian brotherhood; and that they ſhould eſteem him, and behave towards him, not as a Chriſtian brother, but as if he were not a Chriſtian. This, I ſay, by a fair conſtruction, is all that the Apoſtle could be ſuppoſed to mean by putting away from among themſelves the inceſtuous perſon, becauſe this is the behaviour which St. *Paul* recommended at other times in like caſes, and even in this very epiſtle juſt before, with reſpect to ſuch Chriſtian brethren as ſhould be guilty of fornication, idolatry, drunkenneſs, *&c.* as at verſe 11; and becauſe the *Corinthian* Chriſtians had not behaved thus towards this offender when it was their duty to have done ſo; and alſo becauſe it is agreeable to the direction which Chriſt had given with relation thereto. The ſame charge St. *Paul* gives to the Chriſtians at *Theſſalonica*, 2 *Theſ.* iii. 6. *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye withdraw yourſelves from every brother that walk-*

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eth diſorderly, and not after the tradition which ye have received of us. Verſe 14. *And if any man obey not our word by this epiſtle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be aſhamed.* Thus again in St. *Paul*'s epiſtle to *Titus*, chap. 1. ver. 10, 11, 12, 13. *For there are many unruly and vain-talkers and deceivers, eſpecially they of the circumciſion, whoſe mouths muſt be ſtopped, who ſubvert whole houſes, teaching things that they ought not for filthy lucre's ſake. One of them, even a Prophet of their own, ſaid, The* Cretians *are always liars, evil beaſts, ſlow bellies. This witneſs is true; wherefore rebuke them ſharply, that they may be ſound in the faith*; that is, that they may be reformed. And if ſuch rebuke ſhould not have its effect in reforming thoſe wicked men, then the Apoſtle's advice is, that they ſhould be ſhunned and avoided, that they ſhould be eſteemed and treated not as Chriſtian brethren, but as vicious and wicked men, and as if they were not Chriſtians, tho' they profeſs themſelves to be ſo. Chap. iii. ver. 10, 11. *A man that is an Heretick after the firſt and ſecond admonition reject, knowing that he that is ſuch is ſubverted and ſinneth, being condemned of himſelf.* Here it is allowed by the Learned, that the word *reject* in the original is the ſame as to *avoid*; ſo that the charge to *Titus* is, that he ſhould avoid the company and friendſhip of ſuch a man as St. *Paul* referred to, that he ſhould

eſteem

eſteem him, and behave towards him, not as a Chriſtian brother, but as if he were not a Chriſtian. And as to the word *Heretick*, it can ſignify but little to enquire into its original ſignification, becauſe it is not the name but the thing which is to be conſidered in the preſent caſe. Every one who for filthy lucre's ſake (which was plainly the caſe St. *Paul* referred to) or to anſwer any other vile purpoſe to himſelf or others, does ſo groſſly corrupt Chriſtianity, as thereby to pervert the great and main deſign of the goſpel of Chriſt, by rendering it inefficacious for the reforming the vices, and rightly directing and governing the affections and actions of men, ſuch an one is, I think, an Heretick in the Apoſtle's ſenſe, and ought to be rejected, that is, ſhunned and avoided, by every true Chriſtian. Again, St. *John*'s advice to the Elect Lady, upon a like occaſion, is of the ſame kind, *John* ii. 9, 10, 11. *Whoſoever tranſgreſſeth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Chriſt, hath not God; he that abideth in the doctrine of Chriſt he hath both the Father, and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your houſe, neither bid him God ſpeed, for he that biddeth him God ſpeed is partaker of his evil deeds.*

As to what St. *Paul* ſaith of delivering over to Satan the inceſtuous *Corinthian*, this, I think, was not a judicial act, by which the ſinner was excommunicated or cut off from

the body of Chriſt, but rather an act of piety, as it was a ſolemn addreſs to God; an act of juſtice to Chriſtianity, as it was deſigned to remove the ſcandal which the offender, and the unſuitable behaviour of the *Corinthian* Chriſtians towards him, had brought upon it; and an act of charity to the inceſtuous perſon, as it was kindly intended to bring him to repentance and reformation. And here, the better to underſtand the Apoſtle's meaning, it is to be obſerved, that God did, or at leaſt St. *Paul* thought he did, in ſome particular inſtances afflict ſome Chriſtians, and take away the lives of others, on account of ſome great and ſcandalous offences which they had been guilty of. Thus when the Apoſtle in his firſt epiſtle to thoſe very *Corinthians*, chap. xi. verſe 21, had complained of their intemperance at their love-feaſts, in that one was hungry and another was drunken, which indiſpoſed them for a right and proper remembrance of Chriſt in the Lord's Supper; and had likewiſe obſerved to them, *verſe* 29, that by ſuch their profanation of this ordinance they expoſed themſelves to the juſt diſpleaſure of God; he adds, *ver.* 30, *For this cauſe many are weak and ſickly among you, and many ſleep.* And that the ſickneſs and weakneſs which St. *Paul* refers to was not (in his opinion) the natural effect of the intemperance of thoſe *Corinthians* who had been thus afflicted, but the immediate

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chaſtiſement of Almighty God, ſeems evident from the words which follow, *verſes* 31, 32. *For if we would judge ourſelves we ſhould not be judged. But when we are judged we are chaſtened of the Lord, that we ſhould not be condemned with the world.* This, I think, ſhews plainly what St. *Paul* thought of this matter, *viz.* that God did in ſome particular inſtances afflict with ſickneſs and weakneſs ſome Chriſtians, and take away the lives of others, on account of the great and ſcandalous offences they had been guilty of. This being obſerved, the caſe ſeems to be as follows. There was in the Church of *Corinth* a notorious offender, *viz.* one who had committed ſuch fornication as was not once named among the *Gentiles, viz.* that a man ſhould have his father's wife, 1 *Cor.* v. 1. This was a fault ſo juſtly blameable, as that of courſe it was a great ſcandal to Chriſtianity. This was what the reſt of the *Corinthian* Chriſtians ought to have been aſhamed of, and it is what they ought to have uſed their endeavours to reform their offending Brother from, by admoniſhing him over and over in order to bring him to repentance; and if they had failed of that, then they might, for any thing that appears to the contrary, have juſtly declared him to be an unworthy member of their Society. However, they ought to have avoided his company and friendſhip, and to have eſteemed him, and behaved towards him, *not as a Chriſtian* brother, but as if he

were not a Chriſtian; that thereby they might guard againſt being corrupted by him, and alſo proteſt againſt his wicked behaviour, and ſo remove or at leaſt leſſen the ſcandal, which had been brought upon Chriſtianity by his means. But the *Corinthian* Chriſtians were ſo far from acting towards this offender in the manner before mentioned, that on the contrary they ſeemed rather to countenance him in his wickedneſs, which added greatly to the ſcandal, *verſe* 2. This, when taken together, was an extraordinary caſe; that is, the fault of the inceſtuous perſon, and the unſuitable behaviour of the other Chriſtians at *Corinth* towards him, were greatly ſcandalous to Chriſtianity; and this induced St. *Paul* to make uſe of an expedient, or an extraordinary remedy, (which he hoped would be effectual) in order to remove it; *viz.* he deſired the *Corinthians*, that when they ſhould be aſſembled together as a Chriſtian Society, in the name, or according to the appointment, of Chriſt, to pay their publick acknowledgments to God, where tho' he ſhould be abſent in perſon yet his mind would be as it were preſent with them, they would then offer up their requeſt to God, that he would be pleaſed to lay ſome heavy bodily affliction upon the inceſtuous perſon, in confidence that the power of Chriſt would be preſent with them to to afflict this offender, as it had been in

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afflicting others among them for their abuſe of the Lord's ſupper (tho' in a more exemplary manner in the preſent caſe) in order to bring him to repentance, and thereby to remove the ſcandal from Chriſtianity, which his offence and their unſuitable behaviour towards him had brought upon it, *ver.* 3. 4, 5. *For I verily, as abſent in body but preſent in ſpirit, have judged already as tho' I were preſent, concerning him that hath ſo done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt when you are gathered together, and my ſpirit with the power of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, to deliver ſuch an one unto Satan for the deſtruction of the fleſh, that the ſpirit may be ſaved in the day of the Lord Jeſus.* The petitioning God to lay ſome bodily and ſevere affliction upon the offender, is here called *delivering him to Satan,* in conformity to the language of thoſe times, which was grounded upon an opinion that Satan was the inſtrument in inflicting diſeaſes upon men. And thus St. *Paul* calls the *thorn,* which was *in his fleſh,* the *meſſenger of Satan to buffet him.* And thus he delivered *Hymenæus* and *Alexander* unto Satan, that they might learn not to blaſpheme. This is a fair and an intelligible account of the caſe, which is perfectly agreeable with the reſt of the New Teſtament, and therefore it may juſtly be preſumed that it is the true account of it. For to ſuppoſe that Satan and his power were ſo much at the call and diſpoſal

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of the *Corinthian* Chriſtians, as that he would by their order and appointment take to a wicked man, and afflict him, till he had brought him to repentance and amendment of life, or in order thereto, is to compliment Satan with more virtue and goodneſs than he is uſually allowed to have.

THIS, Sir, ſeems to be the ſtate of the caſe, according to the account which Chriſt and his Apoſtles have given of this matter. I am ſenſible it is commonly urged, that if Chriſtians are ſo far to avoid the company and friendſhip of wicked men who profeſs Chriſtianity, as not to eat with them at their ordinary meals, then much more ought they to exclude ſuch men from joining with them in all acts of religious worſhip, becauſe the reaſons for ſuch excluſion are ſtronger in the latter caſe than in the former. I anſwer, the reaſons for excluding ſuch wicked men from Chriſtian Societies, whether in the former or in the latter caſe, or both, I think are theſe three, *viz.* firſt, to prevent being corrupted by them; ſecondly, to ſhame them, and thereby to bring them to repentance and amendment; and thirdly, to remove, or at leaſt leſſen, the ſcandal which is brought upon Chriſtianity by their means: but all thoſe ends may as well be anſwered by excluding ſuch wicked men from the Chriſtian brotherhood, as by caſting them out of the Church. And firſt, to avoid *being corrupted* by wicked men, the proper means

means is to avoid the company of ſuch men in private life, and not in acts of religious worſhip; becauſe the danger of being corrupted ariſes from aſſociating with them in the former and not in the latter caſe, as it is in the former, and not in the latter, that their vicious actions are known and practiſed. To join with ſuch men in acts of religious worſhip is not likely to be hurtful in this reſpect; whereas to maintain friendſhip with them in private life is very likely to be ſo, as evil communications corrupt good manners. Secondly, to ſhame men for their wicked actions in order to bring them to repentance and amendment, the proper means is to ſhun and avoid their company in private life; becauſe ſuch a behaviour is a conſtant and ſtanding reproof to them, it upbraids them of folly, and ſhews they are not worthy nor fit to be converſed with, and this tends to ſhame them and bring them to repentance; whereas the excluding ſuch men from joining in acts of religious worſhip may have the contrary tendency, as it bars them from that which may be the means of their converſion. *If thou bring thy gift to the altar* (ſaith our Lord) *and there remembreſt that thy brother hath ought againſt thee*, &c. which ſuppoſes that mens attendance on publick worſhip tends to lead men to ſerious reflection, to look back upon their paſt behaviour, and thereby to bring them to repentance and amendment if they have done

done amiſs. It likewiſe ſuppoſes, that known offenders are at liberty to attend God's publick worſhip if they pleaſe. Thirdly, to remove, or at leaſt leſſen, the ſcandal brought upon Chriſtianity by the wicked lives of thoſe who profeſs it, the means is, that each Chriſtian in his private capacity ſhould ſhun and avoid their company, ſhould ſhut them out of the Chriſtian brotherhood; by which behaviour they would not only proteſt againſt the wicked actions of ſuch men, but alſo diſown their brotherly relation to them, and thereby would ſhew, that tho' ſuch wicked men are among them, yet they are not of them, and that Chriſtianity is not juſtly chargeable with their crimes; and this would remove, or at leaſt leſſen, the ſcandal brought upon Chriſtianity by their means. Here we ſee that all thoſe ends can well be anſwered without introducing that authority, that judicial power into Chriſtian Societies, which Chriſt foreſaw would be greatly injurious to his faithful ſubjects, and therefore has, or at leaſt ſeems to have, forbid the uſe of it.

I am likewiſe ſenſible it may be urged, that all voluntary Societies are ſuppoſed to be inveſted with power to appoint the terms upon which men are to be entered into them, and to exclude ſuch as do not keep up to thoſe terms. To which I anſwer, that the ſuppoſition is not to be admitted in the preſent caſe; becauſe as Chriſt is the founder of Chriſtian Societies, ſo in all

thoſe things in which he has been pleaſed to give rules and directions to them, in all ſuch things they are not to be their own directors, but, as Chriſtian Societies, they are to follow the rules and directions left them by their founder. And tho' Chriſtian Societies are, or at leaſt ought to be, ſo far voluntary, as that it ought to be left to every man's choice whether he will be a Chriſtian or not, and conſequently whether he will be a member of any Chriſtian Society or not, as Chriſt hath not inveſted any Chriſtian, nor any Set or Order or Body of men among Chriſtians, with power and authority to judge and determine for any other perſon or perſons in theſe reſpects, or to force or compel men to be Chriſtians, or Members of any Chriſtian Society, without, or in oppoſition to, their own judgment or choice; I ſay, tho' Chriſtians, and conſequently the members of Chriſtian Societies, are or ought to be ſo far voluntary and independent with regard to other men, yet they are not voluntary and independent with regard to Chriſt their maſter; but are obliged, as his diſciples and the ſubjects of his kingdom, to be directed and guided by his laws, in all thoſe inſtances in which he has been pleaſed to interpoſe and give directions to them; which is the preſent caſe. Chriſtian Societies are ſuppoſed to be regulated and governed by the rules and directions left them by Chriſt their founder: For otherwiſe

they do not properly come under that denomination; and therefore ſuch Societies are not at liberty to appoint what terms they pleaſe, upon which men are to be admitted into them, and then caſt men out if they do not keep up to thoſe terms; but are obliged, as the ſubjects of Chriſt's kingdom, to be directed and governed, in theſe reſpects, by the rules and directions left them by their maſter. And as Chriſt has plainly ſhewn what are the grounds or qualifications of diſcipleſhip to him, ſo whoever has theſe qualifications, ſuch an one has a right to Church-Communion, that is, to be a member of a Chriſtian Society; and conſequently whoever refuſe ſuch men Chriſtian communion, ſuch refuſers in this act renounce their allegiance to Chriſt, and in effect ſay they will not have him to reign over them. How antichriſtian muſt it therefore be, for men to appoint terms of Chriſtian communion which Chriſt hath not appointed, and to reject thoſe he has. This is like the conduct of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* of old, who made void the commands of God by their traditions. And here, I think, it may not be amiſs to obſerve, what a ſevere reproof our Lord gave thoſe who made the commands of God to give place to the inſtitutions and traditions of men (that is, the inſtitutions and laws of the Church, to ſpeak in the language of our own times.) Thus *Matt.* xv. from verſe 1. to verſe 10. *Then came to Jeſus Scribes and Phariſees*

Phariſees which were of Jeruſalem, ſaying, Why do thy diſciples tranſgreſs the tradition of the elders, for they waſh not their hands when they eat bread? But he anſwered and ſaid unto them, Why do ye alſo tranſgreſs the commandment of God by your own tradition? For God commanded ſaying, Honour thy father and thy mother; and he that curſeth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye ſay, Whoſoever ſhall ſay to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatſoever thou mighteſt be profited by me, and honoureth not his father or his mother, he ſhall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your traditions. Ye Hypocrites, well did Eſaias *propheſy of you ſaying, This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worſhip me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* This ſurely is juſtly applicable to our times, in which the Creeds and Conſtitutions of Churches (which are no other than the traditions of men) are made the ground-work of Chriſtianity, and the teſt of mens Diſcipleſhip to Chriſt. So that now, tho' a man be a true believer in Jeſus Chriſt, and ſubmits himſelf to be governed by his laws, and conſequently is a faithful ſubject of Chriſt's kingdom, yet if he does not come up to the Church's ſtandard of Chriſtianity, and does not ſubmit to be governed by the Church's laws,

then all the former goes for nothing; he may notwithſtanding be an Heretick, and fit to be cut off from the body of Chriſt. Good God! Is not this to make void the commandments of Chriſt by the traditions of men? *Well did* Eſaias *propheſy of you ſaying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worſhip me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

I am alſo ſenſible, that tho' Chriſtian Societies are in duty bound to follow the rules and directions left them by Chriſt their founder, yet there are many things relating to decency, order, and the like, *(viz.* ſuch as appointing the time when, and the place where, they ſhall aſſemble together to pay their publick acknowledgments to God) concerning which Chriſt has not interpoſed to give any directions to them; in which caſes it is abſolutely neceſſary that ſome rules ſhould be laid down and followed: For otherwiſe all the valuable ends of Chriſtian Aſſociation cannot poſſibly be obtained. And as this muſt unavoidably be the caſe, the queſtion is, Who muſt lay down thoſe rules? And the true anſwer I think is, that it muſt be the reſpective Societies themſelves; and that for theſe reaſons. Firſt, becauſe they are the ſeveral Societies reſpectively who alone are intereſted in them, and therefore no other perſon or perſons can poſſibly have a right

a right of dominion over them in theſe reſpects; and conſequently whatever rules of this kind are neceſſary to any Chriſtian Society, the ſeveral members of that Society in their collective capacity, and they only, have a right to judge and determine for themſelves with regard to thoſe rules. Secondly, Chriſt hath expreſsly forbid that any authority or dominion ſhould be exerciſed by the Subjects of his kingdom, conſidered as ſuch, one over another; and conſequently if any rules are neceſſary to be obſerved by a Chriſtian Society, then that Society, or the ſeveral members of it in their collective capacity, and they only, have a right to appoint thoſe rules. And agreeably to this is St. *Paul*'s advice, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 40. *Let all things be done decently and in order*, which advice was not given to any particular perſon or perſons, but to the whole body of Chriſtians at *Corinth*. As to the Clergy, they are ſet apart to be ſervants or miniſters to the ſeveral Churches in which they are appointed to ſerve, and not to be maſters over them, or lawgivers to them. And as to what is ſaid, *Hebrews* xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves, for they watch for your ſouls as thoſe that muſt give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief:* This I think is beſt explained by a parallel caſe, *Matthew* xxiii. 1, 2, 3. *Then ſpake Jeſus to the multitude and to his Diſciples, ſaying, The*

Scribes

Scribes and the Phariſees ſit in Moſes's *ſeat. All therefore whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do.* Which is the ſame as if our Lord had ſaid, The *Scribes* and *Phariſees* are become (through cuſtom or otherwiſe, for it does not appear that they were by divine appointment) teachers of *Moſes*'s law; all therefore that they, from that law, ſhall make appear to you to be your duty, that obſerve and do. This is evidently the meaning of our Lord, becauſe the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* are here conſidered as teachers of *Moſes*'s law, and not as lawgivers to the people, and becauſe what was grounded only upon their authority, *viz.* their traditions, our Lord elſewhere condemns, and ſeems at leaſt to juſtify his Diſciples in the breach of them, when they eat bread with unwaſhen hands. In like manner Chriſtian Paſtors and Biſhops are appointed to be Watchmen to the people, to exhort and ſtir them up to the practice of their duty, to diſſuade them from doing what is evil, and the like; and it is the people's duty to ſubmit or be obedient to them in that capacity, that is, it is the people's duty to attend to their inſtructions and admonitions, to practiſe what they make appear to be their duty, and carefully to avoid whatever they make appear to them to be their crime. This, I think, muſt be the meaning of the Apoſtle in the text before recited, becauſe this is all the ſubmiſſion and obedience that is due to a watchman,

watchman; and becauſe it is not to be ſuppoſed, that the Apoſtle would ſet up any authority in the Church in oppoſition to Chriſt's ſpecial charge and command to the contrary.

POSSIBLY it may be farther urged, that if this be a true repreſentation of the caſe, then if Chriſtianity be never ſo much corrupted, whether in doctrine, worſhip, or otherwiſe, ſuch corruption muſt continue and be perpetuated thro' all generations, becauſe there is no proviſion for, but rather an effectual bar is put to, all reformation. And this leads me to obſerve what rules and directions are given with relation thereto, *viz.*

THIRDLY, 2 *Cor.* vi. 17. *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.* Here St. *Paul* informs us what God hath declared ſhould be done, when Chriſtianity is ſo corrupted, either in doctrine, worſhip, or any other way, as that mens minds and conſciences are defiled by it; namely, every faithful Chriſtian muſt come out of, and ſeparate himſelf from, ſuch corruption, whether in doctrine, in worſhip, or otherwiſe, and from the Societies among whom ſuch corruption takes place and prevails. And as he thereby enters his proteſt againſt ſuch corruption, and does the beſt he can to reform it, ſo God will approve and juſtify his conduct herein. *Come out from among them, and be ye ſepa-*
ſaith the Lord, and touch not the un-
clean

clean thing, and I will receive you. And tho' this is urged by the Apoſtle only to prevent the *Corinthian* Chriſtians from being unequally yoked together with unbelievers, yet as the reaſon is the ſame, or rather ſtronger, in all ſuch unions and aſſociations by which the minds and conſciences of Chriſtians are defiled, therefore the divine direction mentioned by the Apoſtle muſt be applicable to all ſuch caſes. St. *Paul* indeed, in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, chap. xvi. verſe 17, beſought them to *mark thoſe who cauſe diviſions and offences*; but then it is to be conſidered, that in the preſent caſe it is the corrupters of Chriſtianity who cauſe diviſions and offences, and not thoſe who ſeparate from and proteſt againſt ſuch corruption. Such Separatiſts, or Schiſmaticks, are ſo far from being criminal or blameable, that on the contrary they are highly approved in the ſight of God. *Come out from among them and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.* And as it is the duty of every Chriſtian to endeavour to reform ſuch abuſes of Chriſtianity as aforeſaid, by coming out of, and being ſeparate from, ſuch corruption, and from the Society in which it takes place; ſo every man is conſtituted a judge for himſelf, when and where ſuch corruption does take place; becauſe there is no other man, nor ſet, nor order, nor body of men among

among Chriſtians, whom Chriſt hath conſtituted to judge for him in this reſpect.

THUS I have ſhewn what thoſe rules and directions are, which Chriſt and his Apoſtles have given with regard to Chriſtian Societies, and Church-Diſcipline; and likewiſe what muſt be done when Chriſtianity is corrupted as aforeſaid, in order to reform it from ſuch corruption. Perhaps it may be farther urged, that excommunicating corrupt members from Chriſtian Societies, and caſting them out of the Church, was practiſed in the firſt and pureſt ages of Chriſtianity; and therefore ſuch excommunication muſt have been agreeable to the will of Chriſt in this reſpect.

I ANSWER, firſt, that if what I have obſerved above be a true repreſentation of the caſe, then ſuch excommunication, as conſiſts in caſting men out of the Church, could not be juſtifiable in any age, becauſe Chriſt has plainly and expreſly forbid the uſe of it; and has likewiſe backed the prohibition with the reaſon upon which it is grounded, which reaſon holds good in every age, as Chriſt intended the prohibition ſhould which is grounded upon it. The tares muſt not be ſeparated by excommunication from the wheat, but both muſt grow together in every age of the Church until the day of judgment, according to the commandment of Chriſt; and therefore the example of any age, how pure ſoever it may

be ſuppoſed to be, cannot poſſibly juſtify the breach of ſo plain a law. Again:

I ANSWER, ſecondly, that the Apoſtolick age (which ſurely will be allowed to be the pureſt) was not free from corruption; and therefore excommunication might be a corruption of Chriſtianity, tho' practiſed in that age. And thus we find it was complained of by St. *John* in his third Epiſtle, *verſes* 9, 10. *I wrote unto the Church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore if I come I will remember his deeds which he doth, prating againſt us with malicious words, and not content therewith, neither doth he himſelf receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and caſteth them out of the Church.* Here we have the origin of excommunication, the principle it ſprang from, and the effects of it; which were ſuch as Chriſt foreſaw, and in a manner foretold, it would have. *Diotrephes* was the firſt we read of that excommunicated his Chriſtian brethren, and thereby oppoſed ſo plain a precept of Chriſt; and therefore I think we may fairly conſider him as the beginner of this practice. This St. *John* ſhewed a great diſlike of, and was determined to oppoſe him in it, tho' his oppoſition did not put an end to that practice, as the experience of after-ages has abundantly ſhewed. *Diotrephes* had many followers, and excommunication ſoon became frequent in the Chriſtian Church, and it has been practiſed

practiſed more or leſs down to this time; tho' this is not to be wondered at, becauſe when any kind of corruption has once taken place, it is not eaſily rooted out, eſpecially when it ſerves to gratify the pride, ambition, and avarice of men; which is the preſent caſe. And as *Diotrephes* introduced excommunication, ſo it was his love of preeminence that led him to it. The principles, which excommunication ſprang from, were pride and luſt of power. This is what our Lord took all poſſible care to prevent from taking place in his Church. He gave it in charge that no Authority, Superiority, or Preeminence ſhould take place among the Subjects of his kingdom. Thus *Matthew* xxiii. 8, 9, 10, 11. *But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your maſter, even Chriſt, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called maſter, for one is your maſter, even Chriſt. But he that is greateſt among you ſhall be your ſervant.* Luke xxii, 24, 25, 26. *And there was alſo a ſtrife among them, which of them ſhould be accounted the greateſt. And he ſaid unto them, The Kings of the Gentiles exerciſe lordſhip over them, and they that exerciſe authority upon them are called Benefactors. But ye ſhall not be ſo; but he that is greateſt among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth ſerve.* Or as St. *Matthew* hath it,

it, chap. xx. verſes 26, 27. *But it ſhall not be ſo among you, but whoſoever will be great among you, let him be your miniſter; and whoſoever will be chief among you, let him be your ſervant.* Which is the ſame as if he had ſaid, There ſhall be no ſuch thing as greater or leſſer among the Subjects of my kingdom, except it be by a man's being of greater uſe and ſervice to his brethren than others are. But pride and luſt of power got the better of theſe precepts of Chriſt, and the *Diotrephites* ſoon prevailed. Thoſe appointed to watch over Chriſtian Societies for their good, thro' love of preeminence ſoon made themſelves maſters of thoſe whom they were appointed to ſerve; and that has been too much the caſe ever ſince. And as pride and luſt of power are the principles from which excommunication ſprang, ſo (according as Chriſt foreſaw, and for which reaſon he forbad it) ſad have been the effects of it; good and virtuous men, or the faithful ſubjects of Chriſt's kingdom, have been the greateſt ſufferers by it. And this has been the caſe not only in the firſt inſtance of it by *Diotrephes*; but alſo thro' the ſeveral ages of the Church, great and terrible have the effects of the excommunicating power been to many honeſt good Chriſtians.

THUS, Sir, I have repreſented the caſe to you in the plaineſt manner I can, and have ſhewn what appears to me to be the will of Chriſt touching this matter, which I beg

you

you will ſeriouſly and diſpaſſionately conſider; and that you will do it with a mind perfectly free from all love of preeminence, and from a thirſt after worldly riches and grandeur, which have been the bane of Chriſtianity; and then I truſt it will be kindly accepted. All queſtions, in which the duty of Chriſtians or the intereſt of Chriſtianity are concerned, ought to be treated with the utmoſt fairneſs and freedom, in a decent manner, and with a Chriſtian Spirit, ſuitable to the dignity and importance of the ſubject to which they are related; and therefore if it ſhould be thought that what I have here offered is erroneous, yet I hope and expect, that thoſe who ſhall ſo judge will endeavour to ſhew it to be ſuch by reaſon and good argument, and not treat either me or it with contempt, or with names of reproach.

BEFORE I conclude I beg leave to obſerve, that true Chriſtianity, or the goſpel diſpenſation, is a ſcheme of providence intended and calculated not to gratify the pride and ambition, or avarice of any man, or order or body of men among Chriſtians, by loading them with great power, dignity, and wealth; but it is a ſcheme of providence kindly intended and wiſely calculated to reform the vices, and rightly to direct and govern the affections and behaviour, of mankind. In this view of it it is a beautiful and glorious diſpenſation, which is highly worthy of God to give, as he is the great and

wiſe governor of the intelligent and moral world; and in this view of it it is likewiſe worthy of all acceptance among men. If it were ſeen in this view, it would be more eaſily and better underſtood, and this would be a ſafe guide to us in all our enquiries about it. And on the other ſide, if it be ſeen in the oppoſite view, *viz.* as a ſcheme of providence intended and calculated to gratify the pride, ambition, and avarice of a particular order or body of men among Chriſtians, by loading them with great power, dignity and wealth; then of courſe it will become difficult to be underſtood, becauſe then it will be the buſineſs of thoſe, who are thus intereſted in it, to make it ſo; that thereby the reſt of their fellow Chriſtians may have the greater dependence upon them.

I WILL only add, that if what I have offered ſhould give occaſion to thoſe accuſers of their brethren, who read the writings of others only to find out matter for ſcandal and defamation, to repreſent me as endeavouring to deſtroy all ſpiritual diſcipline, and to root up the fences of the Church; then, as I have not in theſe papers advanced any thing of my own, (at leaſt that does not appear to be the caſe,) but only ſhewn what thoſe rules and directions are, which Chriſt and his Apoſtles have given to Chriſtians and to Chriſtian Societies, with regard to the point in hand; ſo ſuch ſcandal

cannot

cannot reſt upon me, but muſt terminate upon them.

I AM, *Reverend Sir*, a Lover of Virtue and Truth, and a hearty Well-wiſher to the Happineſs and Well-being of Mankind both here and hereafter,

THO. CHUBB.

A N

ENQUIRY

CONCERNING

COVENANTS:

Wherein the NEW or CHRISTIAN COVENANT is particularly considered.

In a Letter *to the Reverend Dr.* WATERLAND.

AN ENQUIRY CONCERNING COVENANTS.

Reverend Sir,

AS your diſcourſe concerning fundamentals has given occaſion for the following reflections, ſo I beg leave to offer them to your moſt ſerious conſideration. To be ſecure of God's favour and of the happineſs of another world, ſurely are points of the greateſt concern to every man; and therefore God could not ſhew his regard for the well-being of mankind in a better way, than by ſending his Son into the world to ſet men right in this grand affair, by repreſenting to them plainly and expreſsly what are the true and only grounds of their acceptance in his ſight, and of ſinners obtaining his mercy and forgiveneſs. And as Chriſt was thus *the way, the truth, and the life*, by plainly pointing out to men the true and only way to God's favour and life eternal; ſo he *is* by way of eminence called *their Saviour*. And whoever are any way

ſubſervient to this end, by helping and aſſiſting men in their enquiry concerning it, or by prevailing upon them to walk in that path which leads to life, ſuch men, according to their meaſure and degree, may be ſaid to be *workers together with Chriſt*, 2 *Cor.* vi. 1. But then whoever meddle in this matter ought to take great care that they do juſtice to the goſpel of Chriſt, and to the Souls of men, leſt they be found to be Subverters of the one, and Deſtroyers of the others, by preaching another Goſpel than Chriſt hath preached, and by pointing out to men another way to God's favour and life eternal than Chriſt hath pointed out unto them; or by making that perplexed and difficult which Chriſt hath made plain and eaſy.

THE term *covenant*, when taken ſtrictly and properly, and in the ſenſe in which it is uſed among us, I think, ſignifies a *ſtipulation* or an *agreement* which two parties enter into, and by which they mutually engage themſelves to perform ſomething; and what they thus engage themſelves to perform are called the *conditions of the covenant*. And as the conditions are not uſually executed immediately upon making the covenant, but are to be performed, in whole or in part, in time to come; ſo ſuch agreements are uſually fully ſpecified in writings called *indentures*, in order to ſhew hereafter what ſuch covenant was, and thereby to prevent, if poſſible, any miſunderſtanding or miſrepreſentation *with regard* to it. And that it may fully

appear

appear in time to come, that the parties have thus covenanted, and thereby ſeverally engaged themſelves to perform what is particularly and fully ſpecified in the indentures, ſomething external is to be performed; *viz.* they declare it to be their own act and deed, and interchangeably ſet their hands and ſeals to ſuch indentures, before proper perſons as witneſſes thereof; which indentures, declared, ſigned and ſealed as aforeſaid, become vouchers in time to come, and prove the truth and certainty of ſuch covenant. Here it is to be remember'd, that the conditions and the ſeals of a covenant are not only diſtinct, but greatly different from each other; the conditions being eſſential to a covenant, whereas the ſeals are no more than proofs or witneſſes to it. This account contains, I think, the full import of the word covenant, when taken ſtrictly and properly, and in the ſenſe it is uſed among us.

But when the term covenant is applied to God in the Scriptures, and he is ſaid to covenant with his creatures, it is not always uſed in a ſtrict and proper, but ſometimes in a figurative ſenſe; that is, the term *covenant* does not always ſignify a ſtipulation or an agreement, which God and his creatures have mutually entered into, and by which each party have engaged themſelves to perform ſome things as the conditions of ſuch covenant; but ſometimes it ſignifies a promiſe made on the part of God to his creatures;

tures; and thoſe to whom ſuch promiſe was made, were by virtue of it in God's covenant, without any ſtipulation or agreement entered into. And as the term *covenant* ſometimes ſignifies God's promiſe, ſo ſometimes ſuch promiſe was given abſolutely without any condition, or without any previous qualification or ſuitableneſs in the ſubject to whom the promiſe was made; and ſometimes it was limited to ſuch condition, or ſuch ſuitableneſs in the ſubject, as the the promiſe required. And when the latter was the caſe, then ſuch condition, or ſuch ſuitableneſs in the ſubject as the promiſe was made to, may be called the condition of the covenant, tho' it was only required on the part of God, and was not ſtipulated on the part of man; becauſe where ſuch ſuitableneſs, or ſuch condition, was wanting, the covenant or promiſe became void and of none effect. And when God at any time made ſuch promiſe, or thus covenanted with his creatures, and annexed any thing external to it, to be a ſign, token, or memorial of it, or when he required any external action to be performed to anſwer that purpoſe, ſuch external thing or action was called the *token* of God's covenant, as it preſerved the ſenſe and remembrance of it upon the minds of his creatures. And in this view of it ſuch token may be called the *ſeal* of God's covenant, as it did, in a remote *ſenſe*, witneſs to it. And that this is ſometimes

intended

intended by the terms *covenant*, and the *token* of the covenant, as applied to God in the Scriptures, is evident from the Scriptures themſelves, where they treat of this matter. Thus,

Geneſis ix, from verſe the 8th to verſe the 18th, *And I, behold I, eſtabliſh my covenant with you and with your ſeed after you, and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beaſt of the earth with you, from all that go out of the ark, to every beaſt of the earth. And I will eſtabliſh my covenant with you; neither ſhall all fleſh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither ſhall there be any more a flood to deſtroy the earth. And God ſaid, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me, and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. I do ſet my bow in the cloud, and it ſhall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it ſhall come to paſs, when I bring a cloud over the earth, and the bow ſhall be ſeen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant which is between me, and you, and every living creature of all fleſh: and the waters ſhall no more become a flood to deſtroy all fleſh. And the bow ſhall be ſeen in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlaſting covenant between me, and all fleſh that is upon the earth. And God ſaid unto Noah,*

This

This is the token of the covenant, which I have eſtabliſhed between me and all fleſh that is upon the earth. Here we ſee, that the everlaſting covenant, which God made with man and every living creature for perpetual generations, was not a ſtipulation or an agreement which God and his creatures mutually entered into, and by which each party engaged to do ſome things as the conditions of this covenant; but only an abſolute unconditional promiſe made on the part of God to his creatures, by which promiſe thoſe creatures are in this covenant, without any ſtipulation or agreement entered into; which promiſe was, that God would not any more bring the waters of a flood upon the earth to deſtroy all fleſh, as he had done before. And that the memory of this promiſe might be perpetuated through all generations, God appointed the rainbow to be a ſign, token, or memorial of it; that when it appeared in the cloud, and was ſeen by the fathers, they might relate God's promiſe (which the rainbow was made the token of) to their children, and they to their children, and ſo down to our lateſt poſterity. This, I ſay, is the uſe of this ſign; for as to God himſelf, he never forgets his promiſe, and therefore does not ſtand in need of ſuch a remembrancer. And in this view of the caſe, the rainbow may be ſaid to be the ſeal of God's covenant, not as if it obliged God to make good his promiſe, nor yet to remind him

that

that ſuch promiſe had been made; becauſe God would remember and keep his promiſe, whether any ſuch token were annexed to it or not; but as it reminds us that ſuch promiſe has been made, and ſo, in a remote ſenſe, witneſſeth to it. And here the caſe is the ſame, whether the rainbow be the produce of thoſe laws by which the natural and material world has been governed ever ſince the creation, or whether nature ſuffered a change to make way for it; becauſe it is not a natural but an arbitrary ſign or token of the promiſe it is annexed to, that is, the rainbow does not of itſelf ſhew that God will not drown the world, but it was arbitrarily made a token of that promiſe, in which God has declared that he will not do it. Again,

Geneſis xii. 1, 2, 3. *Now the Lord had ſaid unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's houſe, unto a land that I will ſhew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bleſs thee, and make thy name great; and thou ſhalt be a bleſſing. And I will bleſs them that bleſs thee, and curſe him that curſeth thee, and in thee ſhall all families of the earth be bleſſed.* Here we ſee that God's promiſes were twofold. Firſt to *Abram*'s ſeed; and theſe ſeem to be partly abſolute, and partly conditional, *viz.* that he would give them the land of *Canaan* for an inheritance, that he would bleſs and

make them a great nation, &c. And as God foreſaw the great wickedneſs and degeneracy which the bulk of mankind would be ſunk into in after-times, ſo ſecondly he promiſed *Abram*, that from him ſhould deſcend, a perſon who ſhould be their reformer, and conſequently their Saviour. *And in thee* (that is, *in thy ſeed*, as it was expreſſed Chap. xxii. 18.) *ſhall all the families of the earth be bleſſed.* Theſe promiſes made on the part of God, without any ſtipulation or agreement entered into either by *Abram* or his ſeed, or mankind, (to whom they were made) on the other part, are in other parts of the Scripture called God's covenant. Thus with regard to that promiſe made to *Abraham*'s ſeed, it is in 2 *Kings* xiii. 23. called God's covenant with *Abraham*. *And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compaſſion on them, and had reſpect unto them, becauſe of his covenant with* (that is, his promiſe made to) *Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob*, &c. So again with reſpect to God's promiſe to the reſt of mankind through *Abraham*'s ſeed, *viz.* that one ſhould ſpring from him in whom all families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed, that is likewiſe called a covenant, *Gal.* iii. 16, 17. *Now to Abraham and his ſeed were the promiſes made. He ſaith not, and to ſeeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy ſeed, which is Chriſt. And this I ſay, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Chriſt, the law, which was four hundred*

and

and thirty years after, cannot diſannul, that it ſhould make the promiſe of none effect. Again:

The forementioned promiſe of God to *Abraham*'s ſeed is repeated at Chap. xvii. from the beginning to verſe 15, and is called God's covenant. *And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and ſaid unto him, I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant* (that is, I will make good the covenant which I have made) *between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, ſaying, As for me, behold my covenant is with thee* (that is, I have already engaged myſelf by promiſe to thee) *and thou ſhalt be a father of many nations; neither ſhall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name ſhall be Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee,* (or I will make thee) *And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make many nations of thee, and Kings ſhall come out of thee, and I will eſtabliſh my covenant between me and thee, and thy ſeed after thee in their generations, for an everlaſting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy ſeed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy ſeed after thee, the land wherein thou art a ſtranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlaſting poſſeſſion; and I will be their God. And God ſaid unto Abraham,*

Thou ſhalt keep my covenant therefore, thou and thy ſeed after thee in their generations; (which is the ſame as if it had been ſaid, As I have made a promiſe to thee and to thy ſeed after thee, therefore do thou and thy ſeed after thee in their generations keep or preſerve the remembrance of that promiſe, by a conſtant and perpetual uſe of the ſign or token which I ſhall now annex to it for that purpoſe) *this is my covenant which ye ſhall keep* (or this is the token by which the memory of the covenant ſhall be perpetuated that I have made) *between me and you and thy ſeed after thee, every man-child ſhall be circumciſed. And ye ſhall circumciſe the fleſh of your foreſkin, and it ſhalt be a token of the covenant between me and you. And he that is eight days old ſhall be circumciſed among you, every man-child in your generations; he that is born in the houſe, or bought with money of a ſtranger, which is not of thy ſeed. He that is born in thy houſe, and that is bought with thy money, muſt needs be circumciſed; and my covenant* (or the token of my covenant) *ſhall be in your fleſh for* (a memorial of) *an everlaſting covenant. And the uncircumciſed man-child, whoſe fleſh of his foreſkin is not circumciſed, that ſoul ſhall be cut off from his people* (that is, when in the poſſeſſion of *Canaan*, he ſhall loſe his inheritance) *he hath broken my covenant*, (or forfeited his intereſt in it.) Here we ſee, that as God exhorted *Abraham* ſteadily to perſevere in his duty, *Walk before me and be thou perfect*; ſo for his

his encouragement herein he renewed his covenant with, or promiſes to, him. Which covenant was not a ſtipulation or an agreement, which God and *Abraham* had mutually entered into, and by which each party had obliged themſelves to perform ſome things as the conditions of this covenant; but only promiſes made on the part of God, which promiſes were (I think) partly abſolute, and partly conditional; *viz.* that God would give to *Abraham*'s ſeed the land of *Canaan*, &c. And that this covenant (that is, the knowledge of God's promiſes) might be perpetuated, God appointed that a mark ſhould be upon their fleſh, every male ſhould be circumciſed, as a token or a memorial of it. And that this mark might be continued, and not be dropped or laid aſide by them, and thereby the ſenſe and remembrance of God's promiſes be loſt among them, God appointed that upon whomſoever this mark was wanting, that ſoul ſhould be cut off from his people; that is, he ſhould have no ſhare in the promiſe, he ſhould have no inheritance in *Canaan* amongſt his brethren. And tho' by a figure of ſpeech circumciſion is here called the covenant, yet ſtrictly ſpeaking it was not the covenant, but only a ſign, token, or memorial of it. And thus it is expreſſed verſe 11. *And ye ſhall circumciſe the fleſh of your foreſkin, and it ſhall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.* And thus it was underſtood by St. *Paul*, *Rom. iv. 11. And he* (viz. *Abraham*) received

ceived the ſign of circumciſion, a ſeal of the righteouſneſs of the faith which he had being yet uncircumciſed. The promiſe of God to, or his covenant made with, *Abraham*, was when *Abraham* was in uncircumciſion; and God required him to receive circumciſion as a ſign, token, or memorial of that covenant. And,

HERE it is to be remember'd, that tho' God's promiſe was made to *Abraham*'s ſeed, yet it was not to all his ſeed, but was limited to the Off-ſpring of *Iſaac*. Thus at verſes 20, 21. *And as for Iſhmael I have heard thee; behold I have bleſſed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve Princes ſhall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will eſtabliſh with Iſaac*, &c. Neither was the promiſe made to all the ſeed of *Iſaac*, but only to the poſterity of *Jacob*, as in *Gen.* xxv. 23. *And the Lord ſaid unto her, (viz. Rebekah) Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people ſhall be ſeparated from thy bowels; and the one people ſhall be ſtronger than the other, and the elder ſhall ſerve the younger*; that is, the poſterity of the elder ſhall give place to the poſterity of the younger, with reſpect to the covenant or promiſe which God had made to *Abraham* their father, to give his ſeed the land of *Canaan* for an inheritance: and that this was the caſe, the event ſhewed. The forementioned covenant or promiſe God likewiſe

renewed

renewed to *Iſaac*, as in *Gen.* xxvi. 3, 4. and alſo to *Jacob*, Chap. xxxv. 11, 12. Again,

IT is farther to be remember'd, that when a perſon was circumciſed (which generally was not the perſon's own act, but rather the act of him who had authority over him) he did not hereby perſonally enter into covenant with God, but only receive a mark upon his fleſh, (with regard to which moſt perſons were paſſive) which mark was only a ſign, token, or memorial of that promiſe which God had made to *Abraham*'s ſeed, confined to the Poſterity of *Jacob*. I ſay, that by a perſon's being circumciſed he did not hereby perſonally enter into covenant with God, but only received a mark upon his fleſh, as a token of that covenant or promiſe which God had made to the Offſpring of *Jacob*, in the perſon of *Abraham* their father. And accordingly *Abraham* was required, not only to be circumciſed himſelf, but alſo to circumciſe every male that he had authority over, whether born in his houſe, or bought with his money, tho' they were not included in that covenant, which circumciſion was made the token of. And thus we find not only that *Abraham* himſelf was circumciſed, but alſo that he *took* (*Gen.* xvii. 23.) *Iſhmael his ſon, and all that were born in his houſe, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's houſe, and circumciſed the the fleſh of their foreſkin*: tho' not any of them

them were included in the covenant, nor received any advantage from it, either in their perſons or in their poſterities; for as to *Iſaac*, he was not yet born: And this muſt afterwards have been the caſe of many others. And as circumciſion was made the token of that covenant or promiſe which God had made to *Abraham*, as aforeſaid; ſo the better to ſecure the uſe of it, and thereby to preſerve the memory of that covenant (and as parents are generally very careful to ſecure the temporal intereſt of their children) God appointed that every male child ſhould be circumciſed at eight days old; and that upon whomſoever this token was wanting (of the Poſterity of *Jacob*, to whom the promiſe was made, when in the poſſeſſion of the promiſed land) ſuch perſon ſhould forfeit his intereſt in the covenant, and ſuch want ſhould be deemed a breach of it. But no man could poſſibly break a covenant, or forfeit his intereſt in it, that had not been previouſly entered into it. And this ſhews that circumciſion, according to the original inſtitution, as it was appointed by God, was not to the perſon who received it a perſonal covenanting with God, but only, and at moſt, a token of a covenant which the circumciſed perſon was entered into, and intereſted in, antecedently to his circumciſion. Indeed in after-times, when the people of *Iſrael* were in poſſeſſion *of the promiſed* land, circumciſion became a

mark

mark or badge of the *Jewiſh* religion; and accordingly, whoever was proſelyted to that religion, and was circumciſed, did, by his receiving that mark upon his fleſh, make profeſſion that he was a *Jew*, and conſequently that he looked upon himſelf obliged to obſerve the *Jewiſh* law. And thus St. *Paul* told the *Galatians*, that if a man be circumciſed, he is a debtor to do the whole law; that is, by ſubmitting to this rite in obedience to the *Jewiſh* law, he profeſſed himſelf to be a *Jew*, and as ſuch he was obliged to keep the whole law: *Galatians* v. 3. Not that circumciſion did of itſelf lay a man under this obligation; but only as he by this profeſſed himſelf to be a *Jew*, therefore he was obliged as aforeſaid. For when St. *Paul* took and circumciſed *Timothy*, *Acts* xvi. 3. he did not do it that thereby *Timothy* might be obliged to keep the whole *Jewiſh* law, but only that the Apoſtle might avoid the cenſure of the *Jews* who were in thoſe quarters. Neither did *Timothy* by being circumciſed become obliged to keep the whole law, becauſe he did not ſubmit to this painful rite in obedience to the *Jewiſh* law, but only to ſcreen the Apoſtle from cenſure, as aforeſaid. Whenever a man profeſſed himſelf to be a *Jew*, whether by being circumciſed in obedience to the *Jewiſh* law, or by keeping the *Jews* Sabbath after the manner of a *Jew*, or any other way, by ſuch profeſſion he acknowledged his obliga-

tion to obſerve the *Jewiſh* law. But then I think it is very improper to ſay, that every time, and in every action, in which a man made profeſſion that he was a *Jew*, he either made or renewed a covenant with God, or that ſuch a profeſſion was the ſeal of God's covenant; becauſe God's covenant conſiſted in his giving his promiſes to his people, and a rule of action for them to walk by, as the condition of thoſe promiſes. I ſay, that God's covenant conſiſted only in theſe things, and not in any perſonal promiſe or profeſſion, which his people might make concerning them. Again:

Exodus xxvii. 28. *And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Write thou theſe words; for after the tenor of theſe words I have made a covenant with thee, and with Iſrael. And he was with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water; and he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten Commandments.* Here we ſee, that the giving to the people of *Iſrael* a rule of action, for them to direct their behaviour by, is called making a covenant with them; which ſuppoſed, that if they paid obedience to this law, then God would make good the promiſes that he had made to their fathers; and this was without any ſtipulation or agreement at all. And the two tables, upon which this law was written, are called the tables of the covenant; and the ſabbath was appointed to be kept as

a token

a token of this covenant: And this is referred to in other parts of the Scripture, as the covenant which God made with *Iſrael*, when he brought them out of the land of *Egypt*. Moreover, when the people of *Iſrael* in after-times were obedient to this law of God delivered to them by *Moſes* in the ten commandments, they were then conſidered as being in his covenant; and when they became a diſobedient people, they were then conſidered as breaking God's covenant; and all this was without any ſtipulation or agreement entered into. Again:

Numbers xxv. 12, 13. *Wherefore ſay, Behold I give unto him* (viz. *Phinehas*) *my covenant of peace. And he ſhall have it, and his ſeed after him, even the covenant of an everlaſting Prieſthood, becauſe he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the Children of Iſrael.* Here we ſee that the covenant of an everlaſting Prieſthood, which God made with *Phinehas*, and with his ſeed after him, was not a ſtipulation or an agreement which the two parties entered into, but only a promiſe on the part of God, by which he gave or appointed *Phinehas* to the Prieſthood, and promiſed the continuance of it to his iſſue, ſo long as they behaved as they ought, and thereby render'd themſelves worthy of that office. This previous condition or ſuitableneſs in the ſubject, *viz.* a right behaviour, tho' it was not expreſſed, yet it was implied in the promiſe,

as is evident from God's cutting off *Eli*'s houſe from the Prieſthood on account of the wicked behaviour of his ſons, 1 *Samuel* ii. 30. *Wherefore the Lord God of Iſrael ſaith, I ſaid indeed that thy houſe and the houſe of thy fathers ſhould walk before me for ever; but now the Lord ſaith, Be it far from me, for them that honour me I will honour, and they that deſpiſe me ſhall be lightly eſteemed.* And here it is to be obſerved, that as God's promiſe to *Phinehas* and his houſe is called God's covenant with them, ſo this covenant had no viſible ſign or token annexed to it; which ſhews, that ſuch outward marks or tokens are not neceſſary parts of, but mere appendixes to, ſuch covenants.

WHAT I have here obſerved, I think, is ſufficient to ſhew, that generally, when God in the Scriptures is ſaid to covenant with his creatures, it was not a ſtipulation or an agreement which the two parties entered into, and by which they mutually engaged themſelves to perform ſome things as the conditions of ſuch covenant; but only, and at moſt, it was a revelation of God's will to mankind, containing a rule of action for man to walk by, and God's promiſe annexed to the obſervation of it. This was all that was included in the term *covenant* in the inſtances I have given above; and in one of them at leaſt there was not ſo much, that is, it was an abſolute promiſe, without any condition or previous qualification annexed

nexed to it. And accordingly thoſe to whom ſuch revelation was made, and ſuch promiſe was given, were by virtue of it in God's covenant, and ſo continued whilſt they lived in obedience to the law, without any perſonal entering into or renewing their covenant with God, that is, without coming into any formal bargain or agreement with their maker.

And as this was evidently the caſe with reſpect to moſt of the covenants, which, in the old teſtament, God is ſaid to have made with his creatures, ſo the caſe is the ſame with regard to that new covenant, which God is ſaid to have made with mankind by the miniſtry of his Son, and of which Chriſt is ſaid to be the Mediator: This new covenant being no other than a revelation of God's will concerning us, wherein men are informed what are the true and only grounds of their acceptance with God, and of ſinners obtaining the divine mercy, and what will be the certain conſequences of mens becoming the proper objects of God's favour, or of their continuing to be the proper objects of his juſt diſpleaſure. And whoever comes to the knowledge of this revelation, and anſwers the true intent and purpoſe of it, by repenting and turning to God, and doing works meet for repentance, in denying all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and by living a godly, a righteous, a ſober and a benevolent life, ſuch an one is ſtrictly and properly

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in God's covenant, without any ſtipulation or agreement entered into. Whether a man's perſuaſion of the truth of the aforeſaid revelation be grounded on written or oral tradition, or by what way or means he came by his information, it mattereth not. For if the end of that revelation be truly anſwered upon a man, by his being perſuaded of its truth, and by that perſuaſion's having its proper effect and influence upon his mind and life, then he is ſtrictly and properly in God's covenant; becauſe God's promiſes are made to the end, and not to the way or means by which that end was brought about. And that this is the truth of the caſe is evident as well from what was foretold of it in the old teſtament, as from what is recorded of it in the new.

THUS *Jeremiah* XXXI. 31, 32, 33, 34. *Behold the days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the houſe of Iſrael, and with the houſe of Judah, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, (which my covenant they brake, altho' I was an huſband unto them, ſaith the Lord.) But this ſhall be the covenant that I will make with the houſe of Iſrael after thoſe days, ſaith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they ſhall be my people; and they ſhall teach no more every man his neighbour,*

neighbour, and every man his brother, ſaying, Know the Lord; for they ſhall all know me from the leaſt of them to the greateſt of them, ſaith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their ſin no more. This, I think, is allowed to be a prophecy of that favour which God would give to mankind in and by the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, and of the previous qualifications which ſhould render men the objects of this grace, *viz.* he would make ſuch plain diſcovery of his will, and of the true and only grounds of acceptance in his ſight, and of the benefits which would attend mens ſincere endeavours to pleaſe him, as that there ſhould be no occaſion for men to be enquiring of and teaching each other what is the will of God, and what are the true grounds of acceptance in his ſight, and what will be the conſequence of acting agreeably with, or contrary to, his laws; becauſe thoſe things would be plainly and expreſly revealed to, and ſet before them. And upon whomſoever this Goſpel ſhould have its proper effect, by commanding and governing not only the outward behaviour, but alſo the hearts and affections of men, to ſuch God would grant the forgiveneſs of ſins and life everlaſting. This is that covenant that God would make with the houſe of *Iſrael*, and with the houſe of *Judah*, and indeed with all mankind; and tho' life everlaſting is not expreſſed, yet it is implied in the forementioned

covenant

covenant or promiſe. Here we ſee, that the favour which God vouchſafed to mankind by Jeſus Chriſt, and particularly to the houſes of *Iſrael* and *Judah*, as it was to be offered particularly to them by the miniſtry of his Son, is called *making a covenant* with them, tho' there is no ſtipulation or agreement entered into by the parties concerned, but only the promiſe of God made to mankind upon the conditions aforeſaid. And it is called a *new covenant*, as it promiſed not what God had promiſed of old to the poſterity of *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, *viz.* the land of *Canaan* for an inheritance, but the forgiveneſs of ſins and life everlaſting. Here we likewiſe ſee, that in this new covenant God's will concerning us, and the grounds of our acceptance in his ſight, would be ſo plainly and expreſly revealed, as that he that runs may read them; and theſe things would be ſo intelligible and eaſy to be underſtood, as would be level to all capacities. Under the goſpel diſpenſation there would be no occaſion for one neighbour to teach or call upon another to know the Lord (that is, to know their duty, and what will render them pleaſing to their maker) becauſe all would, or might, know him from the leaſt to the greateſt. But then tho' this was in fact the caſe when the goſpel covenant was firſt promulged, and when it appeared in its native ſimplicity, yet ſince the men of this world have had the explaining it,

who

who have had their advantages to make upon the weakneſs and ignorance of the people, the caſe has been greatly otherwiſe. For according to the repreſentation which has been given of this new covenant, it is a collection and compoſition of the moſt profound myſteries, which require the moſt refined underſtanding and the greateſt ſkill in metaphyſicks to diſcern them, and to have a clear and diſtinct perception of the moſt ſubtil diſtinctions that are couched under them. Alas! who is there among us that has ſuch a clear and diſtinct perception of the following propoſition, *viz. The Father is eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghoſt eternal, and yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal*; as not to be in danger of ſplitting upon one or other of theſe rocks, *viz.* of confounding the perſons on the one ſide, or of dividing the ſubſtance on the other; that is, of believing that there is but one individual, eternal, intelligent, all-powerful agent or being on the one ſide, or that there are three diſtinct, eternal, intelligent, all-powerful agents or beings on the other ſide? This, I ſay, requires the moſt refined underſtanding and the greateſt ſkill in metaphyſicks clearly to diſcern and diſtinguiſh; and yet the diſtinguiſhing and diſcernment of this, and many other ſuch like myſteries, are conſidered as neceſſary conditions of the Chriſtian Covenant. In this view of the caſe, tho' it be a matter of the utmoſt concern to every man to know

the Lord, and conſequently it is a thing very deſirable that every man ſhould be teaching and helping his brother and his neighbour in ſo neceſſary an affair, yet it muſt of neceſſity be generally omitted, or done to no good purpoſe, becauſe it would generally be above mens ability to perform. And ſuppoſing a man were deſirous of information in the preſent caſe, then he might not only go from brother to brother, and from neighbour to neighbour, but alſo from pariſh to pariſh, before he could get any reaſonable ground of ſatisfaction, if he did at all; becauſe there is not one in a thouſand, if that, capable of giving it, tho' perhaps the moſt weak and ignorant do conſtantly (like parrots) repeat the ſentences by which thoſe myſteries are expreſſed, without having any ideas annexed to their words, and are likewiſe capable of, and are too often diſpoſed to exerciſe, a blind and bitter zeal for or againſt what they do not in the leaſt underſtand. But ſurely this cannot be the true ſtate of the caſe with regard to that new covenant the Prophet ſpeaks of, in which they ſhould teach no more *every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, ſaying, Know the Lord; for they ſhall all know me from the leaſt of them to the greateſt of them, ſaith the Lord.* And

As the new covenant, which God would make with his creatures, is thus deſcribed in the old teſtament, ſo agreeable to this is what is recorded of it in the new. *That revelation* of God's will firſt publiſhed

by

by Jeſus Chriſt, and afterwards by his Apoſtles, was what the body of mankind were greatly intereſted in; and therefore it is characterized by the term *Goſpel*, or *the good news*. And as the principal things promiſed in this revelation, or new covenant, were, that God would grant unto men the forgiveneſs of their ſins and life everlaſting, upon condition they would repent and amend their ways; ſo this new covenant is likewiſe characterized by thoſe terms, *viz.* the *doctrine of repentance and remiſſion of ſins*; theſe characters, *viz.* the goſpel and the doctrine of repentance and remiſſion of ſins, being uſed by Chriſt himſelf to expreſs one and the ſame thing, namely, the new covenant, or that revelation of God's will which was publiſhed by his miniſtry. And that this is the caſe, ſee *Mark* xvi. 15. *And he ſaid unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature*; compared with *Jeremiah* xxxi. 31, 32, 33, 34. as mentioned above, and *Luke* xxiv. 45, 46, 47. *Then opened he their underſtandings that they might underſtand the Scriptures, and ſaid unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name among all nations.* Here Chriſt informs us, that the goſpel, or that new covenant of favour which God made with and proclaimed to mankind by his miniſtry, and which had *been ſpoken of* in the Scriptures, was no o-

ther than the doctrine of repentance and remiſſion of ſins. This good news was what mankind greatly needed to be informed of and inſtructed in, and therefore it behoved Chriſt, as he had undertaken to be their Saviour, and as he had been put to death, and thereby an end had been put to his miniſtry, to riſe again from the dead, and to commiſſion and ſend forth his Apoſtles to preach the goſpel to all nations, which he had preached to the ſingle nation of the *Jews* in his own perſon. The bulk of mankind by their vicious and wicked lives had rendered themſelves the objects of God's juſt diſpleaſure; and they were ſo far ſunk in their underſtandings, as to have but little ſenſe either of their folly or their danger. This being the caſe, God ſent his Son into the world to awaken in men a juſt ſenſe of their folly, to apprize them of their danger, and to ſhew them the only ſure way by which they may eſcape it, and alſo ſecure to themſelves God's favour and their future happineſs, *viz.* by repenting and turning to God, and doing works meet for repentance, as aforeſaid. But tho' this goſpel, this doctrine of repentance and remiſſion of ſins, was to be preached to all (as good and bad men are generally every where mixed together) yet they were the wicked and vicious only which were immediately intereſted in it, according to Chriſt's declaration, *Mark* ii. 17. *They that are whole have no need of the phyſician, but they that are ſick: I came not*

to

to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance. And

As it behoved Chriſt, who was conſtituted to be the Saviour of mankind, to take care that this good news, this doctrine of repentance and remiſſion of ſins, ſhould be preached to all nations; ſo he acted accordingly. *Mark* xxvi. 15, 16. *And he ſaid unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature: He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.* Which is the ſame as if he had ſaid, As I am going to leave the world, I therefore give it you in charge, that you go out into the ſeveral parts of it, and preach to all, both *Jews* and *Gentiles* without diſtinction, the goſpel, *viz.* the doctrine of repentance and remiſſion of ſins; he that believeth, and, in conſequence of that belief, becomes my true Diſciple, (which baptiſm is made the outward ſign or token of) ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, or doth not ſo believe as to become my true Diſciple, but ſtill perſiſts in his wickedneſs, ſuch an one ſhall, or will, in conſequence of his wickedneſs, continue under God's diſpleaſure, or be damned. Baptiſm was antiently uſed as an outward mark or ſign of Diſcipleſhip; ſo that the perſon baptized thereby publickly profeſſed himſelf to be the Diſciple of ſome maſter. Thus the followers of *John* the Baptiſt were baptized, and thereby gave teſtimony of their being

diſcipled

diſcipled to *John*. And thus the followers of Chriſt were baptized, and thereby profeſſed their Diſcipleſhip to him. And therefore when in the Church of *Corinth* the profeſſors of Chriſtianity diſtinguiſhed themſelves one from another, by one ſaying, *I am of Paul*; another, *I am of Apollos*, &c. 1 *Cor.* i. 12, 13. the Apoſtle puts thoſe queſtions to them, *Is Chriſt divided? Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* Which reaſoning ſuppoſed that they had been diſcipled but to one maſter, *viz.* Chriſt. And at verſes 14, 15. he thanked God that he had *baptized none of them ſave Criſpus and Gaius, leſt any ſhould ſay that he had baptized in his own name*, that is, diſcipled men to himſelf. So that the promiſe is not made to baptiſm, but to a man's being Chriſt's true diſciple, which baptiſm is made the outward ſign or token of; the ſign (by a figure of ſpeech commonly uſed in thoſe times) being put for the thing ſignified. Neither is the promiſe made to believing, conſidered ſimply as ſuch, but to ſuch believing as iſſues in Diſcipleſhip to Chriſt. So that it is not barely believing the goſpel, but becoming Chriſt's true Diſciple in conſequence of that belief, which is the ground of mens ſalvation. Neither is it bare infidelity, but it is mens obſtinately continuing in their ſins, which is the ground and cauſe of their damnation. Chriſt every *where* conſidered mens obedience to God's

law

law as the ground of their acceptance in his ſight, and their diſobedience or wicked lives as the ground and cauſe of their damnation. He that heareth Chriſt's ſayings, and doth them, is the only wiſe man, who ſafely builds his houſe upon a rock; but he that hears theſe ſayings, and doth not act accordingly, even tho' he ſhould be fully perſuaded of their truth, ſuch an one ſhews his folly, by building his houſe upon the ſand, that is, by truſting to that which will moſt certainly deceive him. *Matthew* vii. 24,----26.

St. *Matthew* likewiſe gives an account of that ſtrict charge which Chriſt gave his Apoſtles, to preach his goſpel to all nations. Indeed St. *Matthew*, with regard to one point, is very different from all the reſt of the new teſtament, *viz.* he repreſents Chriſt as commanding his Apoſtles to baptize or diſciple men *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.* But this text ſurely muſt have been abuſed by an addition of the words I have recited; and this ſeems to me to have been the caſe for two reaſons: Firſt, as baptiſm is the mark or ſign of Diſcipleſhip to ſome maſter, ſo it is prepoſterous to baptize men in, or into, any other name than the name of him they are diſcipled to, or who is their maſter. And as it is Chriſt only, and not the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, who is repreſented in the new teſtament to be the maſter or head of the body the Church, and the

members

members of this body are conſidered as members of the body of Chriſt only, and not as members of the body of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt; ſo it muſt be greatly prepoſterous to baptize men in, or into, the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, and not in, or into, the name of Chriſt. Secondly, the firſt Chriſtians did not act agreeably to this command, by baptizing or diſcipling men in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt; but, on the contrary, they baptized in the name of Jeſus Chriſt. Thus *Acts* viii. 16. *Only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jeſus.* Chap. xix. 5. *When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jeſus.* And when this ſubject is any where treated of by the Apoſtles, their reaſoning upon the caſe ſuppoſes, that Chriſtians were then baptized in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, and not in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt. Thus *Rom.* vi. 3. *Know ye not, that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt were baptized into his death.* Galatians iii. 23. *For as many of you, as have been baptized into Chriſt, have put on Chriſt.* Here, I think, it is moſt apparent, that the Apoſtolick practice was to baptize men in the name of, or diſciple them to Chriſt, and not to baptize them in the name of, and diſciple them to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt. But ſurely the Apoſtles would not act ſo contrary to the command of Chriſt; and therefore *I think it* may fairly be preſumed, that the

text

text has been abuſed by an addition of the words referred to. And

As the new Teſtament is no other than that revelation of God's will, which was made to mankind by the miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt, ſo whatever attended that miniſtry, which witneſſeth to it that it was of God, may be ſaid to be a ſeal of this Covenant; like as the converſion of the *Corinthians* to Chriſtianity by St. *Paul*'s miniſtry was to them a witneſs or ſeal of his Apoſtleſhip. 1 *Cor.* ix. 2. *If I am not an Apoſtle unto others, yet doubtleſs I am to you; for the ſeal of my Apoſtleſhip are ye in the Lord.* And thus the miraculous power, which the hiſtory ſets forth as attending Chriſt's miniſtry, was a witneſs to, or a ſeal of, this new Covenant. And thus likewiſe Chriſt's laying down his life in conſequence of, and in the defence of his miniſtry, made his blood once ſhed to be a witneſs to, or a ſeal of, this covenant. And thus it is repreſented by Chriſt himſelf, *Mark* xiv. 23, 24. *And he took the cup; and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he ſaid unto them, This is my blood of the new Teſtament, which is ſhed for many.* Theſe words, together with what the other Evangeliſts and St. *Paul* inform us Chriſt added to them, I think, are juſtly paraphraſed in the following manner. And he (*viz.* Chriſt) took the cup, which had been filled with wine for that purpoſe; and when

he had given thanks and praiſe to God for his bountiful providence, then he gave it to his Diſciples, and they all drank of it. And he ſaid unto them, This is to be, in time to come, a memorial of my blood, which will be ſhed for the benefit of mankind; the ſhedding of which will be a witneſs of, or a ſeal of, that new teſtament, or covenant, which God hath made with mankind by my miniſtry, in or by which covenant they have full aſſurance of the remiſſion of their ſins upon their repentance and reformation. Do this, as oft as ye ſhall drink, in remembrance of me as your Lord and Maſter, as your guide and director, as your great exemplar, and as your chiefeſt friend and benefactor; and do you ſo take care to remember me in this inſtitution, as in the uſe of it to be conformed more and more to my likeneſs; then will you truly anſwer the end and purpoſe of this memorial, and then you will be my Diſciples indeed, and the faithful ſubjects of my kingdom. Theſe then are the ſeals of this new covenant, *viz.* the miraculous power which attended Chriſt in the exerciſe of his miniſtry, and the ſhedding of his blood as witneſſing to it. As to baptiſm, this is not in itſelf, nor was it intended to be, a ſeal or witneſs to this covenant, but only an outward mark or ſign of a perſon's Diſcipleſhip to Chriſt, by which the perſon baptized profeſſed to take Chriſt for his maſter, and that he was obliged

ged to frame and faſhion his mind and life according to Chriſt's example, and agreeably to thoſe rules and principles of action which Chriſt had recommended to, and ſet before, him. And as to the Lord's ſupper, this is not in itſelf, nor was it intended to be, a ſeal or witneſs to this new covenant, but only a memorial of Chriſt, by which a lively and affecting ſenſe of him was intended to be preſerved and kept alive in the minds of his people, to anſwer the purpoſe aforeſaid. So that to conſider theſe inſtitutions as the ſeals of the new covenant, or as that by which men perſonally enter into and renew their covenant with God, theſe have no foundation in the nature of the inſtitutions themſelves, nor in what Chriſt has ſaid concerning them, but are grounded only on the doctrines and traditions of men. Indeed whenever a man profeſſes himſelf to be a Chriſtian, whether it be by being baptized, or by partaking of the Lord's ſupper in obedience to the command of Chriſt, or any other way, whether by words or actions, by ſuch profeſſion he acknowledges his ſubjection to Chriſt, and his obligation to be governed by Chriſt's laws; but then it will be very improper to ſay, that every time, and in every action, in which a man profeſſes himſelf a Chriſtian, he either makes or renews his covenant with God; becauſe the Chriſtian Covenant conſiſts in that revelation of God's will, which was once made to mankind by

Jeſus Chriſt, in which revelation God has promiſed men the forgiveneſs of their ſins and life everlaſting, upon condition they repent and amend their ways. I ſay, the new or Chriſtian Covenant conſiſts in theſe things only, and not in any perſonal promiſe or profeſſion men may make concerning them. God's Covenant or Promiſe ſtands good, and is the ſame, whether men promiſe or profeſs any thing concerning it or not; and mens promiſes and profeſſions do neither add to nor take from that Covenant, nor make any alteration in the caſe. It is mens actual performance of the conditions of God's promiſes, which alone enters them into and intereſts them in God's Covenant, and not their profeſſing that they do perform them, or promiſing that they will do ſo. A man by being baptized profeſſes himſelf to be Chriſt's Diſciple: now it is not his baptiſm, but it is his being Chriſt's true Diſciple (which baptiſm is made a mark or badge of) which enters him into, and intereſts him in, God's Covenant. Baptiſm, I think, is rather a profeſſion of what a man is, than a promiſe of what he will be; like as if a man ſhould declare that he is a Chriſtian, by which declaration he rather profeſſes what he is to-day, than promiſes what he will be to-morrow: not but whether baptiſm be conſidered as a promiſe or a profeſſion, or both, it alters not the caſe; becauſe baptiſm does not enter a man into, nor intereſt him in, God's Cove*nant, but* theſe ariſe only and wholly from his

his being Chriſt's true Diſciple, which baptiſm is only an outward ſign or token of.

THUS, Sir, I have given a plain, and I think a fair and true, repreſentation of that Covenant, which by way of diſtinction and preference is called the *new Covenant*, the *Chriſtian* or *Goſpel* Covenant, and the like; which repreſentation is taken from what was foretold of this Covenant in the old Teſtament, and from what is recorded of it in the new. The ſum of the matter is this, *viz.* the new Covenant is not a ſtipulation or an agreement which God and his Creatures mutually entered into, and by which each party engage themſelves to perform ſome things as the conditions of this Covenant; but it is that revelation of God's will which was once made to mankind by the miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt, in which revelation are plainly and clearly ſet forth what are the true and only grounds of mens acceptance with God, and of ſinners obtaining the divine mercy, and likewiſe what will be the undoubted conſequences either of mens obſtinately continuing in their ſins, or of their repentance and reformation from them. This is the new or Goſpel Covenant, the ſeals of, or witneſſes to, which were the miraculous power which attended Chriſt in the exerciſe of his miniſtry, and that blood which he ſhed in the defence and confirmation of it. And whoever is ſo perſuaded of the truth of this revelation, as to anſwer the true intent and purpoſe of it,

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in repenting and turning to God, and doing works meet for repentance, by denying all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and by living a godly, a righteous, a ſober, and a benevolent life, ſuch an one is ſtrictly and properly, and to all intents and purpoſes, in God's Covenant, without coming to any formal bargain, or ſtipulating terms and conditions of agreement with his maker.

ALL that I ſhall farther obſerve is, that if what I have before laid down be a true repreſentation of the Chriſtian Covenant, then I think there can be no place for all thoſe diſtinctions and diviſions you have run into with regard to this ſubject; and that what you have offered to the world upon this head will be ſo far from aſſiſting and helping men in their enquiries concerning this grand affair, that on the contrary it will rather tend at leaſt to perplex and confound weak minds, if not to miſlead and deceive them. This ſurely calls for your moſt ſerious conſideration and attention, and which I hope and preſume you will afford it.

I AM, *Reverend Sir*, a ſincere friend to, and a lover of, virtue and truth, and a hearty well-wiſher to mankind,

THO. CHUBB.

A

DEFENCE

OF

PROTESTANTISM:

In Answer to

The Modeſt Plea for Popery.

Offered to the Conſideration of thoſe whom Papiſts have ſeduc'd, or are endeavouring to draw over to their Religion.

A DEFENCE OF PROTESTANTISM.

WHETHER the complaint of the growth of Popery be well grounded or not, is a queſtion which I cannot anſwer. And ſuppoſing it be juſt, it will not follow that Popery in point of argument has the better of Proteſtantiſm, becauſe the increaſe of Popery may eaſily be accounted for ſome other way. As the doctrine of merit has been entertained and eſtabliſhed in the Church of *Rome*, by which means it becomes a proper principle of action to Papiſts, and as the bringing over Proteſtants to Popery is by them eſteemed greatly meritorious; ſo this is a proper, and probably a prevailing, motive with Papiſts to be greatly induſtrious in making converts to their Religion. However, whether this prin-

ciple be a motive to their zeal in making converts or not, this is apparent, that moſt among them, who are people of fortune, take care to uſe their wealth in ſuch a way as to make it for the preſent intereſt of thoſe Proteſtants who are near them, and have a dependance upon them, to turn Papiſts; and this, together with a repreſentation of the conceſſions made by Proteſtants, and their near approaches both in doctrine and practice to Popery, with other arts which they are not wanting to uſe, may ſometimes ſucceed to the making converts. That ſuch converſions to Popery may ſometimes happen, is not to be wondered at. For as preſent intereſt is the leading and governing principle in abundance of people, and as ſome Papiſts employ their wealth and other abilities, and make uſe of every art and means, to make converts as aforeſaid; ſo it is not at all ſtrange that ſome weak and neceſſitous Proteſtants (who by their high-church principles, and their averſion to ſuch other Proteſtants as differ from them, are beforehand prepared for Popery) ſhould be wrought upon thereby to turn Papiſts, eſpecially when their preſent intereſt is greatly concerned in the caſe.

AND as *Solomon* obſerves, *there is a time and a ſeaſon for every work and every device done under the ſun*; ſo probably Papiſts watch thoſe ſeaſons, in order to render their endeavours ſucceſsful; and this may be the caſe

caſe at this day. This is a time in which murmurings and complaints abound, whether juſt or unjuſt is not the queſtion; this is a time in which Proteſtants are greatly divided into parties, and either do not underſtand, or elſe are regardleſs of, their true intereſt, and in which the affections of many ſeem to be greatly alienated from thoſe who have the government of them. Theſe and other circumſtances, which now concur, ſeem to render it a proper ſeaſon for Papiſts to play their part in making converts; and therefore it may juſtly be preſumed that now their Emiſſaries are buſily imployed, and every engine is ſet at work, and every means is uſed, in order to obtain that end: So that if there ſhould now be more converts to Popery than heretofore, it is not to be wondered at. From what I have obſerved I think it appears, that admitting ſome Proteſtants have of late turned Papiſts, yet it does not follow that Popery in point of argument has the better of Proteſtantiſm, nor does Popery gain much reputation by ſuch converts. However, if Proteſtants could be prevailed upon to conſider what is their true intereſt, and to pay a proper regard to it; if they would be kindly affectionated one to another, and bear one with another in their different ſentiments and practices in matters of Religion, and were they united by a hearty affection to thoſe who have the government of them; then ſurely they would

have nothing to fear from the growth of Popery, becauſe it could not poſſibly hurt them. But great is our misfortune, that this is not our caſe. This therefore is worthy the conſideration of Proteſtants, becauſe it is what they are greatly intereſted in, and it is this weakneſs of ours in which the ſtrength of Papiſts conſiſts. This alſo is worthy the conſideration of thoſe who have the direction of publick affairs, becauſe the ſecurity of the government does greatly depend uponit, and becauſe it lies upon them to take care that our breaches be not widened, but healed. And if thoſe entruſted with the direction of publick affairs could make uſe of ſuch means as would effectually engage the affections of the people to the government they are under, then I think we might challenge both Papiſts and Jacobites, and all who have the intereſt of a Popiſh Pretender at heart, to do their worſt. But farther, I obſerve,

THAT tho', at the reformation, the ground of Proteſtants ſeparation from the church of *Rome* was becauſe Popery is a very great corruption of Chriſtianity, yet thoſe who ſeparated from that church did not give up every abſurd doctrine and ſuperſtitious practice, but retained ſome which with equal juſtice they might have given up and proteſted againſt. But then this is not to be wondered at; neither will it be of advantage to the cauſe of Popery. For as Popery conſiſts of a very large collection of abſurd

ſurd doctrines, and of ſuperſtitious practices; ſo it was not to be expected that thoſe who firſt ſeparated from the church of *Rome* ſhould at once exerciſe ſuch attention, and attain to ſuch diſcernment, as to make an exact and perfect ſeparation of the tares from the wheat; but the contrary to this might more naturally be expected, *viz.* that a mixture would remain, which was plainly the caſe in fact. Thoſe abſurd doctrines and ſuperſtitious practices, which were moſt groſs and moſt apparent, or many of them at leaſt, our firſt Reformers diſcerned, ſeparated from, and proteſted againſt, and others they retained; but then thoſe which they retained cannot poſſibly ſerve the cauſe of Popery, becauſe they are not the leſs abſurd or the leſs ſuperſtitious by being retained by Proteſtants; and therefore all that will follow from it is only this, *viz.* that in all thoſe caſes in which either abſurd doctrines or ſuperſtitious practices remained among Proteſtants, in thoſe inſtances the reformation was imperfect.

AGAIN: At the reformation thoſe inveſted with civil power took upon them to direct in the affairs of religion: And accordingly the reformation of national churches could not poſſibly riſe higher, or come to any greater perfection, than the civil powers of thoſe times were pleaſed to direct and appoint. And ſuppoſing there were ſome doctrines and practices retained by our firſt reformers,

which

which were fit to have been given up and diſcarded, and that theſe, or ſome of them at leaſt, have been by the authority of the civil Magiſtrates (either from principle, or out of policy, and poſſibly from their having been awed or influenced by the Clergy) perpetuated to this time, yet this can be of no ſervice to the cauſe of Popery; becauſe any doctrine is not the leſs abſurd, nor any practice the leſs ſuperſtitious, by its having the authority of the civil Magiſtrate to defend and eſtabliſh it. Beſides, ſuppoſing there are ſome abſurd doctrines and ſuperſtitious practices, which have been and are ſtill ſupported by the civil power among Proteſtants, yet probably theſe have been given up and proteſted againſt by other Proteſtants, and that this is the caſe ſeems evident from the diviſions and ſeparations that have ariſen among them; and therefore the Creeds and Inſtitutions of national Churches cannot be a juſt Teſt of Proteſtantiſm, becauſe they may not be the act of, nor be conſented to, by all Proteſtants. I am a Proteſtant, and it is urged to me by a Papiſt, in favour of Popery, that ſuch or ſuch a doctrine or practice is part of the conſtitution of this or that Proteſtant national Church. Now ſuppoſing ſuch doctrine be abſurd, or ſuch practice be ſuperſtitious, then the queſtion is, What is this to Proteſtantiſm, or what is this to me, who proteſt againſt ſuch doctrine *or practice*, or what advantage can Popery

poſſibly

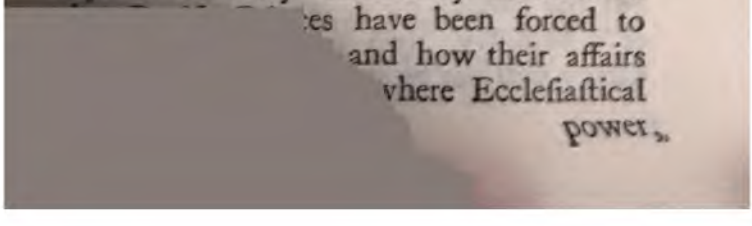
poſſibly gain thereby? Why truly nothing at all, becauſe if there be any ſuch doctrines or practices, in the conſtitution of any national Church among Proteſtants, all that will juſtly follow from it is only this, namely, that in ſuch inſtances their reformation is imperfect, and conſequently that ſuch doctrines and practices ſhould no longer be retained, but ought to be given up and proteſted againſt.

AGAIN: As the Clergy in the church of *Rome* by degrees became poſſeſſed of ſuch great and unreaſonable power, dignity and wealth, as has in fact been greatly injurious to Chriſtianity and to the Chriſtian world; ſo at the reformation thoſe were not reduced to their proper bounds, but in part remained exorbitant with the Proteſtant Clergy; and this has in a great meaſure prevented any farther reformation. For as thoſe who are in poſſeſſion of ſuch power, dignity, and wealth, are generally jealous of and guard againſt every thing which has the leaſt tendency to diminiſh them, and they likewiſe take care to improve every opportunity to enlarge and increaſe them; ſo this, I fear, has been too much the caſe of the Proteſtant Clergy. I ſpeak not this of every Clergyman, but only of the Clergy conſidered as a body, who as ſuch are concerned for, and do apparently purſue, the intereſt of that body; and this, as I ſaid before, has in a great meaſure prevented any farther reformation.

tion. For when any propoſal has been made for the removing or altering any thing which ought to have been removed, or altered, it has been generally oppoſed and rendered unſucceſsful; the Clergy ſtrictly abiding by this principle, namely, not to admit of the leaſt alteration, grounded upon this reaſon, *viz.* that if an alteration be once begun, they cannot be ſure where it will ſtop, and conſequently it may poſſibly affect the power, dignity, and wealth they are in the preſent poſſeſſion of. And indeed thoſe very deſirable things, *viz.* power, dignity, and wealth, which are carried to a great and unreaſonable height, and are plentifully ſhared among the Popiſh Clergy, theſe ſhew it to be for the preſent intereſt; and therefore it has been, and probably will be, the endeavour of the Proteſtant Clergy to approach as near to the Church of *Rome* as is conſiſtent with a ſtate of independency upon her; and accordingly our zealous Eccleſiaſticks have made large conceſſions that way. But then thoſe conceſſions are of no ſervice to the cauſe of Popery, nor can they juſtly be urged againſt Proteſtants, becauſe they are not the conceſſions of Proteſtants in general, much leſs of all them, but only of ſuch men who want to be poſſeſſed of Papal power, dignity, and wealth in a Proteſtant Church. This it is ſaid was puſhed in the Reign of King *Charles* the Firſt; and *if one* may judge from the late claims to

powers

powers independent on the ſtate, and from other circumſtances which have concurred, then probably there is a ſtrong diſpoſition for another puſh. For as all hope and expectation of an enlargement of the power, dignity, and wealth of the Clergy by and from a Popiſh Pretender at preſent ſeems to be loſt, the view of which in times paſt ſpirited ſuch Clergymen, and engaged many of them ſtrenuouſly to oppoſe the government; ſo having little or no expectation from that quarter, I think it may fairly be preſumed they will tack about, in hope of obtaining their ends by and from a Government, which otherwiſe probably they would have little or no regard for. This is the Popery, which of the two we have the moſt reaſon to fear; becauſe we are in more danger of falling into it, and therefore it ought moſt carefully to be guarded againſt. This ſurely is worthy the conſideration of a *Britiſh* Parliament; becauſe if Eccleſiaſtical power, dignity, and wealth be enlarged, then we may be aſſured from the experience of former times, that Eccleſiaſtical Tyranny will ſucceed, and bear a proportion to it. This is likewiſe worthy the conſideration of Proteſtant Princes, who are likely to ſuffer by an enlargement of theſe, as well as their ſubjects. Hiſtory ſufficiently informs us



ces have been forced to
and how their affairs
where Eccleſiaſtical
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power, dignity, and wealth have run up to their height. And thoſe ought to give warning to Proteſtant Princes to beware of Eccleſiaſticks, and to guard againſt any increaſe of their power, dignity, or wealth, leſt ſome time or other the poſterity of thoſe Princes ſhould ſhare in the ſame fate. This alſo is worthy the conſideration of Court Miniſtries, or thoſe who are intruſted with the direction of publick affairs; becauſe as the weight of the Clergy in any nation bears a proportion to the Power, Dignity, and Wealth they are in poſſeſſion of, ſo an enlargement of theſe increaſeth that weight in proportion, and this renders them ſo much the more capable of diſtreſſing a Miniſtry, which is likely to be the caſe, except their intereſt lies on the Miniſtry's ſide; and then they will take care to improve it to the utmoſt, that being generally the governing principle of action to many of them in theſe matters. And when they are gratified in this reſpect, they are not the more to be relied upon; becauſe ſuch a body of Clergy as will be bribed into the ſervice of a Miniſtry to-day, we may be aſſured will turn againſt that Miniſtry to-morrow, if their intereſt will be ſerved by it, this being to act a uniform and conſiſtent part. Beſides, if a Miniſtry have no other point to gain or ſecure but the publick good, which is the buſineſs of a Miniſtry, then ſurely the aid of the Clergy will not be wanted; becauſe this is a

point

point that in all probability may as effectually be gained or ſecured without it; and therefore the calling in the aid of the Clergy (if ſuch a thing ſhould ever be) may poſſibly (with too much juſtice) be thought to be a ſign or token of the want either of wiſdom or virtue in that Miniſtry which ſhall ſo call them in.

HAVING made the precedent obſervations, I proceed to conſider the argument offered in favour of Popery. The grand principle upon which Popery is ſuppoſed to be founded is this, *viz.* that error in points of faith is damnable. From this principle the neceſſity of an infallible living judge, to be always preſent in and with the Church, to determine in matters of faith, is juſtly inferred. And this principle being allowed and maintained by too many Proteſtants, from hence ſeveral conſequences are ſuppoſed juſtly to follow, which greatly affect the cauſe of Proteſtantiſm. Theſe points are the ſum of what is offered in the *modeſt plea for Popery*, which points I ſhall conſider ſeverally and diſtinctly.

Whether the grand principle upon which Popery is founded, and which is its main ſupport, be allowed and maintained by Proteſtants; or whether the conſequences which are ſuppoſed juſtly to follow from that principle do greatly affect Proteſtantiſm, are points of no great importance in the preſent caſe; becauſe if upon examination this principle

ſhould appear to be falſe and groundleſs, then of courſe it muſt fall, and conſequently every thing built upon it falls with it. The point therefore to be enquired into is, whether error in points of faith be damnable. If error in points of faith be damnable, then there are two ways only in which it is capable of being ſo; either from the natural inherent vileneſs and moral turpitude of error itſelf, which renders the erroneous perſon the proper object of the heavy diſpleaſure and wrath of the Almighty, or elſe it is made ſo by the arbitrary appointment and inſtitution of God. But that error in points of faith is not damnable through any natural inherent vileneſs or moral turpitude in error itſelf, is already fully proved to my hand in the *modeſt plea for Popery*, pages 15, 16. The Author's words are as follow: " For if a perſon ſhould form " a wrong judgment of any propoſition, " when he has done all that in reaſon can be " expected from him to have his underſtan- " ding rightly informed, and has not ſuffered " his judgment to be biaſſed or over-ruled by " prejudice, partiality, vitiated affections, or " otherways, but has honeſtly formed it up- " on the caſe according to the evidence " which came within his notice; in ſuch a " caſe as a man follows pure and uncorrupted " nature, and acts agreeably to it, and to " that principle of intelligence planted in him " by the great author of his being; ſo there " cannot poſſibly be any natural inherent

" vileneſs

" vileneſs or moral turpitude in his conduct, " which renders him worthy of, and which " ſubjects him to, the heavy diſpleaſure of his " maker; and therefore if ſimple error in " points of faith be damnable, it muſt be " made ſo by the arbitrary appointment and " inſtitution of God." From what this author has obſerved it appears exceeding plain, that ſimple error of itſelf, and from the nature of the thing, cannot poſſibly be damnable. And that it is not made ſo by any act or inſtitution of God, is a point as plain and evident as the former. God is a being who is infinite in all moral, as well as in all natural, perfections; and therefore it is greatly abſurd in itſelf, and greatly injurious to his moral character, to ſuppoſe that he would puniſh any creature, much leſs puniſh him ſo ſeverely, for that which does not, in the nature of the thing, render that creature the proper object of puniſhment but rather renders him the proper object of approbation and reward; which is plainly the preſent caſe, if ſimple error be made damnable merely by his inſtitution. It would be altogether as juſt to ſuppoſe that the God of truth would be guilty of a lie, as to ſuppoſe that he would, by an act of mere ſovereignty, make error damnable; the latter being equally as conſiſtent with his moral perfections as the former; and therefore the ſuppoſition is not to be admitted. This propoſition then muſt be falſe; and were it contained in any revela-

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tion, could not poſſibly be of God, becauſe this evidence againſt the divinity of a revelation would and muſt be ſtronger than any external evidence that could poſſibly be offered in its favour. But then it is to be remembred, that there is no ſuch propoſition contained in the Chriſtian revelation. Chriſt hath aſſured us from his own mouth, that the end and purpoſe of his coming was to call ſinners to repentance. Whoever therefore, in obedience to the call of Chriſt, repents and turns to God, and does works meet for repentance (which in the Goſpel is called believing, and hearing Chriſt's ſayings and doing them, and doing the will of his father) ſuch an one we are aſſured will be ſaved. And on the other ſide, whoever, notwithſtanding the call and invitation of Chriſt, and the promiſes and threatnings delivered in his Goſpel, will not repent, but will go on in a wicked and vicious courſe of life (which in the Goſpel is conſidered as not believing, not doing Chriſt's ſayings, not doing the will of his father) ſuch an one we are aſſured from the ſame Goſpel ſhall be damned. This is the true Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt touching this matter; but that mere ſimple error in points of faith is damnable, this is no part of that Goſpel, and is only a propoſition advanced and maintained by men who call themſelves Chriſt's followers.

THUS I have ſhewn that the grand prin*ciple upon* which Popery is founded is falſe

and

and groundleſs. I proceed now to enquire whether if this principle has been maintained by Proteſtants, it can be of any ſervice to the Popiſh cauſe. And here I will admit the ſuppoſition, that this principle *viz.* that error in point of faith is damnable, has been allowed and maintained by all Proteſtants, tho' it is far from being the truth of the caſe, becauſe whilſt it has been avowed by ſome, it has been given up and proteſted againſt by others; but admitting it to have been maintained by all, yet ſurely that can be of no ſervice to the cauſe of Popery. For as Popery is a great corruption of Chriſtianity, ſo it is not the leſs corrupt for Proteſtants retaining a doctrine which is part of that corruption; and if this be the caſe of any Proteſtants, then the true inference which follows from it is, not that ſuch Proteſtants ought to turn Papiſts, becauſe that would be going from bad to worſe, and, according to the old proverb, leaping out of the frying-pan into the fire; but the true inference is, that both Proteſtants and Papiſts ought to give up and proteſt againſt this and every other doctrine and practice which in point of argument cannot be defended by either.

And if the aforeſaid doctrine, *viz.* that error in points of faith is damnable, be falſe and groundleſs, as it is before ſhewn to be, then of courſe it muſt fall, and conſequently the bulwark of Popery (*viz.* the neceſſity of

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an infallible living Judge to be always preſent with the Church to determine in matters of faith) and every thing elſe built upon it falls with it; and this ſhews how weak and defenceleſs in point of argument Popery is. I have already obſerved, that Popery is a great corruption of Chriſtianity, conſiſting of a large collection of abſurd doctrines, and of ſuperſtitious and unworthy practices, and that it is not to be wondered at if ſome parts of that corruption clave to our firſt Reformers. But then it will be very inconcluſive to argue, that becauſe there are Proteſtants who do ſtill retain ſome parts of the corruption of Chriſtianity called Popery, that therefore they ought to return back to the Church of *Rome*, and embrace the whole, when the true conſequence is juſt the reverſe, as I have already obſerved, *viz.* that they ought to purge themſelves of thoſe parts of that corruption which yet remain with them.

AGAIN: it is urged in the *Modeſt plea for Popery*, that if one abſurd doctrine be admitted by Proteſtants, then by parity of reaſon any abſurdity may and ought to be admitted by them: And that if one abſurdity be rejected by Proteſtants becauſe it is an abſurdity, then all abſurdities ought to be rejected by them upon the ſame grounds. To this I anſwer, that if Proteſtants would act a conſiſtent part, then this not only might and ought, but it muſt and would be the caſe; that is, then Proteſtants would *no longer* halt betwixt two opinions, by being

ing Proteſtants in part, and Papiſts in part; but they would either give up one or the other; they would either return back to Popery, or give up every thing that is Popiſh; that is, every thing both in doctrine and in practice, which is a corruption of Chriſtianity. But then tho' this great inconſiſtency of ſome Proteſtants be a juſt reproach to them, and renders them worthy of the reproof and admonition mentioned in *Matthew* vii. 3, 4, 5. yet it cannot be of any ſervice to the cauſe of Popery, becauſe an abſurd doctrine, or a ſuperſtitious practice, is not the leſs ſo, nor the leſs a corruption of Chriſtianity, by its being retained by ſome Proteſtants as I have already obſerved. Much leſs will this inconſiſtency of ſuch Proteſtants, be a juſt ground for them to turn Papiſts, becauſe the true uſe which they ought to make of it is, not to become more corrupt by returning back to the Church of *Rome*, but to purge and reform themſelves from thoſe branches of Popiſh corruption which yet cleave to them, as is obſerved above.

AGAIN: it is urged that if God acts from mere ſovereignty in one branch of the Chriſtian Scheme, (which muſt be the caſe if error in points of faith be made damnable by his inſtitution) then he may do the ſame in any or in every other part of it, and then no argument can be raiſed from the moral perfections of God againſt any Popiſh

doctrine or practice whatever; becauſe (upon this ſuppoſition) the moral perfections of God are quite out of the caſe. I anſwer, admitting the reaſoning in this paragraph to be juſt and concluſive, yet it is of no ſervice to the cauſe of Popery, becauſe the principle upon which it is grounded is falſe, as has been ſhewn above. Beſides, Chriſtianity is not an arbitrary inſtitution in whole nor in part, but is founded upon the ſtricteſt reaſon and truth; and therefore the moral perfections of God are a proper foundation for argument with reſpect to it; and conſequently whatever is weak, childiſh, ridiculous, malevolent, and the like, cannot poſſibly have any place in it, or bear any relation to it. And tho' ſome Proteſtants have maintained principles that are favourable to Popery, and which diſqualify them from reaſoning againſt it, becauſe ſuch reaſonings may juſtly be retorted upon them; yet this is of no real ſervice to the cauſe of Popery, becauſe thoſe principles cannot be defended. Neither can this be a proper ground for ſuch Proteſtants to turn Papiſts, becauſe every principle, which in point of argument cannot be defended, ought to be given up, as I have already obſerved.

AGAIN: it is urged that if mere error in ſuch points of faith as are fundamental be damnable, and if ſuch damnable errors be a juſt ground for proſecutions among Proteſtants, then by parity of reaſon they will be as juſt a ground

ground for perſecutions among Papiſts. Anſwer: ſuppoſing this concluſion be juſt, yet it can be of no ſervice to the cauſe of Popery, becauſe the principle it is drawn from is falſe, as has been ſhewn above; and therefore perſecuting or proſecuting men on account of Religion may notwithſtanding not be juſt, but greatly wicked, in either caſe. Man is an intelligent, conſcious, free being, who is not only capable of diſcerning and judging of the fitneſs and unfitneſs of his own actions, and of directing and governing his own conſcience and behaviour accordingly, but alſo he is hereby rendered juſtly accountable for the ſame, and therefore may reaſonably expect to be rewarded or puniſhed in another ſtate according to his behaviour in this. And tho' he is not only liable but in danger of erring in complex and difficult caſes, and conſequently of acting wrong when he intends to act right in ſuch caſes, yet this does not deſtroy his agency, nor render him leſs accountable than otherwiſe he would be, becauſe he is capable of acting a reaſonable or an unreaſonable part, and conſequently of being virtuous or vicious under thoſe circumſtances. Man in complex and difficult caſes is capable not only of examining the queſtion before him, and of comparing things, and drawing concluſions from proper premiſes, and of receiving light and information from others in order to have his underſtanding rightly informed,

formed, and his actions rightly directed; but he is alſo capable of acting fairly, carefully, and impartially, or of being unfair, negligent, and partial in the uſe and application of thoſe means; and therefore he is juſtly accountable for his actions as well in theſe as in all other caſes. And this is the caſe of every individual of our ſpecies, every man in difficult and complex caſes being liable and in danger of erring, ſo hereby every man is by nature diſqualified and render'd incapable of judging for, and governing the conſciences and actions of other men, it being groſsly abſurd to ſuppoſe, that any man or body of men can be qualified, or have a right to judge for, or to govern the conſciences of other men in ſuch caſes, in which thoſe judges are liable to err, as well as thoſe they pretend to judge for. And tho' in difficult and complex caſes a man ought to borrow what light he can from others in order to have his underſtanding rightly informed, and his actions rightly directed; and tho' others ought to give him all the information they can in order to his forming a true judgment of the point in queſtion; yet ſtill he is to direct his actions by his own judgment thus informed, and not by the judgment of others, without, or in oppoſition to, his own. And the reaſons for this are evident, *viz.* firſt, becauſe no other man or body of men are qualified for, or conſtituted his judges or his governors in

theſe

theſe matters. As no other man or body of men are either infallible or impeccable, the want of the former renders them incapable of, and the want of the latter renders them unfit for and unworthy of, ſuch a truſt. Whoever is fallible and liable to error himſelf, is by this diſqualified for being a judge for, and a governor of, the conſciences of other men in matters of religion: and whoever is liable to miſlead, deceive, and impoſe upon others, ſuch an one is by this rendered unfit and unworthy to be intruſted with a power of judging for and governing mens conſciences in theſe matters; becauſe he is not only liable to abuſe his truſt in matters of the higheſt importance, which of itſelf renders it unfit that he ſhould be intruſted with ſuch a power, but alſo the truſt itſelf becomes a ſtrong and powerful temptation to that abuſe, as it may be ſubſervient to the power, dignity, and wealth of thoſe who are intruſted as aboveſaid. And ſuppoſing ſome inconvenience ſhould ariſe to ſociety from mens exerciſing the right of private judgment in matters of religion, yet ſurely that inconvenience bears no proportion to the much greater evils and miſchiefs which have ariſen to mankind from a reſtraint of that liberty, of which all Popiſh countries are ſad and melancholy inſtances; and I think it will be hard to ſhew, that either *England* or *Holland* ſuffers any inconvenience at this time from mens being at liberty to

exerciſe

exerciſe their right of private judgment as aforeſaid. Secondly, every man ought to judge for himſelf, and to have the direction and government of his own conſcience and actions in matters of religion, becauſe he himſelf is anſwerable, and not any other perſon or perſons, for his behaviour herein. Thirdly, every man ought to act thus, becauſe were he to direct his behaviour by the judgment of others, without or in oppoſition to his own, he would in that caſe act quite out of his character, as an intelligent, conſcious, free being; and he would rather appear to be a conſciouſleſs animal, than a moral agent. And as every man is by nature conſtituted a judge for himſelf, and a director and governor of his own conſcience and actions in matters of religion; and as every man is likewiſe by nature excluded from being a judge for, and from being a governor of, the conſciences and actions of other men; ſo if any man, or body of men, ſhould take upon him or them to judge for or to govern the conſciences and actions of any other man; or if he or they ſhould condemn and puniſh a man for judging for himſelf, and for acting according to his own conſcience, this would be to judge and condemn without any juſt authority for ſo doing, and it would be to puniſh where the grounds of puniſhment are wanting, which ſurely muſt be greatly wicked and vile. How abominable muſt it therefore be in the ſight

of

of God for men to afflict and puniſh one another cauſeleſsly, and for judging and acting according to their conſciences; this ſurely muſt be exceeding odious in his ſight. So that by Proteſtants retaining perſecuting principles, they retain the worſt part of Popery, and that which has been the greateſt evil to mankind. Alas! what is Tranſubſtantiation, Purgatory, praying to Saints, and the like, when put in competition with perſecution? The former are but trifles when compared with the latter; the former may be greatly weak, wrong, and ſuperſtitious; whereas the latter is greatly wicked and abominable. The worſt character given of the Whore of *Babylon* is, that ſhe has made herſelf drunk with the blood of the Saints; that is, ſhe has been a perſecutor or proſecutor of innocent people for judging and acting according to their conſciences. This therefore is worthy the conſideration of all perſecutors and proſecutors, both Papiſts and Proteſtants. And it will be but a poor excuſe for all the righteous blood which has been ſhed upon this account, and for all the pain and miſery which they have brought upon their fellow-creatures, for them to urge that thoſe whom they have afflicted were ſtubborn and obſtinate, that they were Hereticks, or Schiſmaticks, or the like. I ſay that theſe will be but poor excuſes when they ſhall be called to give an account to God for all the diſtreſs and miſery which they

have

have thus cauſeleſſly brought upon mankind. Then their righteous judge may very juſtly interrogate every perſecutor and proſecutor after this manner: Who made thee a ruler and a judge in theſe matters? Who art thou that judgeſt another's ſervant? to his own maſter he ſtandeth or falleth. And ſuppoſing it be as thou ſayeſt, *viz.* that he whom thou haſt afflicted was ſtubborn and obſtinate, or he was an Heretick, or Schiſmatick, or the like, yet what is that to thee, who haſt ſuffered no injury by thoſe things, and who waſt neither qualified for nor conſtituted his judge in thoſe reſpects? I appointed and gave it in charge that thoſe tares and the wheat ſhould grow together without moleſtation until this time, which is the time of harveſt, and now I will appoint their ſeparation; but thou haſt taken upon thee to controul me herein. I am their proper judge, who am both able and willing, and will now render to every one of them as they ſhall deſerve; but thou haſt, as it were, wreſted the work out of my hand, and haſt taken upon thee to judge, condemn, and puniſh them before the time. Theſe things ſurely are worthy the conſideration of all perſecutors and proſecutors, becauſe they are matters of the utmoſt concern to them. And tho' to the ſhame of ſome Proteſtants it muſt be acknowledged, that proſecutions on account of religion have ſometimes taken place among them, yet this will not juſtify Papiſts; becauſe perſecutions

by

by them is not the leſs wicked for that ſome Proteſtants have been guilty of the like faults. Neither will the juſtneſs of this charge be a proper ground for ſuch Proteſtants to turn Papiſts, becauſe the true uſe which they ought to make of it is, not to be guilty of ſuch practices for time to come; and then the charge will become groundleſs, and conſequently muſt be vainly urged.

AGAIN: it is urged, that if mere ſimple error in ſuch points of faith as are fundamental be damnable, and if from hence it becomes neceſſary for the preſent comfort and the future ſafety of Chriſtians, that an infallible living Judge ſhould be always preſent with the Church to give an abſolute and certain determination in matters of faith; then as the Church of *Rome* maintains that this infallible living Judge is in and with them, and as this Judge has no competitor, the queſtion is, Why ſhould he be rejected, or what will juſtify Proteſtants in rejecting him? Anſwer: As the principle reaſoned from in this caſe is falſe, therefore there can be no place for the interrogations founded upon it. And tho' in an arbitrary inſtitution (which the Chriſtian is not) the inſtitutor is at his liberty to make what he pleaſes points of faith, and to determine which of theſe ſhall be fundamental and which not, and which indeed would then be variable at pleaſure; yet it muſt be out of the power of any being to alter the nature of things, by

making the ſame propoſition to be a truth at one time, and an error at another; which I think has ſometimes been the caſe with reſpect to the determinations of this pretended infallible Judge in the Church of *Rome*; and ſurely this muſt be a juſt objection againſt any perſon or perſons who ſhall either ſeparately or conjunctly pretend to be ſuch a Judge in that Church, even ſuppoſing Chriſtianity were an arbitrary inſtitution, when in truth it is not.

THUS I have conſidered the argument offered in favour of Popery, and have ſhewn it to be weak and inconcluſive. Upon the whole I obſerve, that if the grand principle upon which Popery is founded, and which is its main ſupport, *viz.* that error in points of faith is damnable, be falſe and groundleſs, as I have before ſhewn it is, and therefore it muſt fall; and if the great Bulwark of Popery grounded upon this principle, and which guards and ſecures almoſt every part of it, *viz.* the neceſſity of an infallible living Judge to be always preſent with the Church to determine in matters of faith; if this Bulwark of Popery falls with it, as moſt certainly it does, then it muſt be very weak and idle in Papiſts to argue againſt Proteſtants upon ſuch falſe and groundleſs principles, which yet is too often the caſe. The ſame may be ſaid with reſpect to ſuch arguments offered in favour of Popery as are drawn from the conceſſions made by Proteſtants, and from their maintaining

taining principles which are favourable to Popery, and the like; theſe are of no real ſervice to the Popiſh cauſe, as is before ſhewn. The caſe is the ſame with reſpect to that bold but groundleſs aſſertion of Papiſts, *viz.* that there is no ſalvation out of the Church of *Rome*. This ſerves to fright and terrify weak minds, who are governed more by their paſſions than their reaſon; and this may ſometimes have its effect, tho' nothing can be more weak than for men to turn Papiſts upon ſuch grounds. The grounds of mens acceptance with God, and of their obtaining the divine mercy, is declared in the Goſpel to be, not their relation to and union with this or that particular ſociety or congregation of Chriſtians called churches, but their repenting and turning to God and doing works meet for repentance, by denying all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and by living a godly, a righteous, a ſober, and a benevolent life. Wherever therefore theſe are found, and the true end and purpoſe of the Goſpel is thus anſwered upon a man, his ſalvation is ſecure according to the Goſpel, whether he be a member of the Church of *England*, of *Scotland*, of *Geneva*, or of *Rome*. But then tho' I do here acknowledge that ſalvation may be had in the Church of *Rome*, yet nothing can be fairly concluded from hence in favour of Popery, nor is mens ſalvation leſs hazardous in that Church on this account. Popery is, as I have already obſerved, a great corruption

of Chriſtianity, which corruption partly conſiſts in pointing out to men falſe grounds of obtaining the divine favour and mercy. This being the caſe, the members of the *Romiſh* Church are in very great danger of relying upon thoſe falſe grounds for ſalvation, which their Church has thus recommended to them, and thereby of neglecting the true and only grounds of their acceptance with God; and this renders their ſalvation exceeding hazardous in that Church, tho' not impoſſible to be obtained. How egregiouſly weak muſt it therefore be for Papiſts to argue, that becauſe Proteſtants allow that ſalvation may be obtained in the Church of *Rome*, and Papiſts deny that it can be had any where but in that Church, therefore it is the duty of Proteſtants to turn Papiſts, becauſe this is confeſſedly chuſing the ſafer ſide; this, I ſay, is weakly urged, becauſe, as I have ſhewn, ſalvation is not more ſafe but more hazardous in the church of *Rome*, and becauſe it is not the opinions of Papiſts nor Proteſtants, but the juſtneſs of thoſe grounds upon which their reſpective opinions are founded, that ought to determine our judgments and practices herein.

I do not here take upon me to examine every thing that is or may be offered in favour of Popery, becauſe that would be going farther than I intended, and becauſe I am not appriſed what is or may be urged on that ſubject. But this I ſay, that if thoſe Papiſts, who,

who, out of regard to truth and their duty, are zealouſly endeavouring to make converts amongſt us, which is a commendable zeal if they would not remain in a great meaſure concealed with reſpect to what they have to offer for their relegion, but would make it publick, by which all people would be rendered capable of examining it, and, if it has ſtrength of argument on its ſide, would have the opportunity of being convinced by it. I ſay, if Papiſts would do this, which I think they ought to be allowed to do without moleſtation, and which is certainly a more fair and reputable way than to remain behind the curtain, offering their arguments only in private to weak or neceſſitous people, then I aſſure them (tho' I can only engage for myſelf) that what they have to offer ſhall be fairly and candidly examined, and, as far as it has truth on its ſide, it ſhall be generouſly and publickly acknowledged. On the other ſide, if Proteſtants would make a conſiſtent, and thereby a juſt and proper, defence againſt Papiſts, then they muſt become Proteſtants throughout, by giving up and proteſting againſt every thing that is Popiſh. For except they do this, Papiſts will make their advantages, and with a great deal of juſtice will turn their arguments upon them. But if they do this, then I think I may be bold to ſay, that Popery in point of argument cannot poſſibly ſtand its ground.

To conclude: if the caſe be as it has been repreſented, *viz.* that Popery greatly gains ground among us, then it will be proper to enquire, who are the people that Papiſts make converts of, and what may be the conſequence of ſuch converſions. As to the firſt, I have already obſerved that it is from the conceſſions our high-church Proteſtants have made, and from the Popiſh doctrines which they retain, that Papiſts derive their ſtrength, and which they make their advantages of; and therefore it is greatly probable that they are weak people of our high-church party, which are converted to Popery by them. This is what the leaders of that party have been a long time preparing the people for (whether intentionally or not, I cannot ſay) by endeavouring to perſuade them to give up their right of private judgment, and to rely upon the judgment of the Church, and by maintaining that the church has rights independent on the ſtate, and the like; and in particular by endeavouring to render Diſſenters as odious and contemptible as poſſible; all which have an apparent tendency to render Popery in the groſs leſs diſagreeable to them. And that it has had this effect is plain and evident from the declarations made by many, *viz.* that they would ſooner turn Papiſts than Preſbyterians. It is to this that two of our Anniverſaries, *viz.* the 30th of *January* and the 29th of *May*, are made ſubſervient; and indeed at preſent

preſent they ſeem to anſwer no other purpoſe, but to prepare the people for Popery in the way before mentioned. And it is by this the popular zeal and the popular outcry againſt Popery, which formerly prevail'd, and was in part a ſecurity againſt it, is now worn off, and the minds of the populace are now much more prepared and diſpoſed for a change that way than heretofore. And as our high-church-men can make but a weak defence againſt Popery upon their own principles, and as the minds of the people have been prepared for Popery by them in the way above mentioned, and this has rendered their party proper ſubjects for the arguments uſed by Papiſts to work upon; ſo it is not unlikely that many weak people of that party have of late turn'd Papiſts, the latter being a natural conſequence of the former. This then ſeems to be the caſe, *viz.* that as high-church conceſſions and high-church doctrines, and the practices of high-church leaders, have paved the way for Popery, ſo it may juſtly be preſumed that they are high-church-men who become converts to it. But then what the conſequence of this will be, I cannot take upon me to ſay, tho' what is aimed at is obvious, *viz*, the deſtruction of our Liberties both civil and religious, the extirpation of the preſent Royal Family, and the bringing in a Popiſh Pretender. And if this be the caſe, which moſt undoubtedly it is,

then

then certainly it is high time for his Majeſty King *George* to diſtinguiſh betwixt his friends and his enemies, and to know who and what he is chiefly to guard againſt. For if his Majeſty and the Royal Family have any enemies, which is a point that does not admit of a diſpute, then the queſtion is who they are, and the anſwer is obvious, *viz.* they are Papiſts, and many high-church-men who are Papiſts in part; and ſhould his Majeſty load any of theſe with his favours, or intruſt them with power, it would be nouriſhing vipers in his boſom, and (if I may ſo ſpeak) with his own milk, who as they will always have his or his poſterity's overthrow in view, ſo ſome time or other (if proper care be not taken) they may have it in their power to effect it. This alſo is worthy the conſideration of our Legiſlature. For if Popery prevails, then our conſtitution and government is proportionably ſo much the more in danger by it; and then it concerns thoſe, who are impowered to make laws for our ſecurity, to do every thing that is neceſſary towards the ſtrengthening the Proteſtant intereſt among us. And as our Proteſtant Diſſenters are well known to be faſt friends to the preſent Royal Family, ſo if they are under any legal incapacity of ſerving the Government, or their Country, or the Proteſtant intereſt, which by the teſt-act they are thought to be, then moſt certainly it ought to be removed. For as the teſt-act *was introduced* formerly to guard againſt Popery

pery under the circumſtances we were then in, ſo the different circumſtances we are at preſent under may render it altogether as proper to aboliſh that act now, in order to anſwer the ſame end. King *Charles* the Second was known to be well affected to Popery, if not a direct Papiſt; and that engaged the Legiſlature at that time to provide againſt the ill conſequences which might ariſe from it. And as it was in the power of the King ſo far to take Papiſts into the Government, as to employ them under him both in civil and military affairs, and thereby to ſtrengthen and increaſe the Popiſh intereſt among us; ſo the teſt-act was introduced to put it out of the King's power to do us this miſchief. But as there is now no danger of his preſent Majeſty's taking Papiſts into the Government, and conſequently the end to be anſwered by the teſt-act ceaſes; and as the Diſſenters by this act are, or at leaſt are ſuppoſed to be, rendered leſs capable of ſerving the Government, their Country, and the Proteſtant intereſt, than otherwiſe they would be; and as Popery is ſuppoſed now greatly to prevail; ſo theſe things, admitting them to be the caſe, render it greatly expedient that the teſt-act ſhould be removed for our better ſecurity againſt it, tho' this is what many of our high-church party will of courſe oppoſe, becauſe it tends to diſappoint what they hope one time or other to bring about. To ſay that it

ought to have been done at the Revolution, is the ſame as to ſay that it ought to be done now, ſeeing it was not done then; and the rather, becauſe the reaſons for removing it are now grown ſo much the ſtronger, as the Popiſh intereſt is increaſed amongſt us.

F I N I S.

Lately Publiſhed.

I. A Diſcourſe concerning reaſon, with regard to religion and divine revelation. Wherein is ſhewn, that reaſon either is or ought to be a ſufficient guide in matters of religion: occaſioned by the Lord Biſhop of *London*'s *ſecond Paſtoral Letter*. To which are added ſome Reflections upon the comparative excellency and uſefulneſs of moral and poſitive duties: occaſioned by the controverſy that has ariſen (with regard to this ſubject) upon the publication of Dr. *Clark*'s *Expoſition of the Church Catechiſm*. The ſecond Edition.

II. An Enquiry concerning the grounds and reaſons, or what thoſe principles are upon which two of our anniverſary Solemnities are founded, *viz.* that on the 30th of *January*, being the day of the Martyrdom of K. *Charles* the Firſt, appointed to be kept as a day of faſting; and that on the 5th of *November*, being the day of our deliverance from Popery and Slavery by the happy arrival of his late Majeſty King *William* the Third, appointed to be kept as a day of thankſgiving. To which is added, The ſufficiency of reaſon in matters of religion farther conſidered: Wherein is ſhewn, that reaſon, when carefully uſed and followed, is to every man who is anſwerable to God for his actions, under any or all the moſt diſadvantageous circumſtances he can poſſibly fall into, whether he reſides in *China* or at the *Cape of Good Hope*, a ſufficient Guide in matters of religion; that is, it is ſufficient to guide him to God's favour, and the happineſs of another world.

III. Four Tracts, *viz.* firſt, An Enquiry concerning the books of the New Teſtament, whether they were written by divine inſpiration, *&c.* Second, Remarks on *Britannicus*'s letter publiſhed in the *London Journals* of the 4th and 11th of *April* 1724, and republiſhed in the Journals of the 5th and 12th of *April* 1729; containing an argument drawn from the ſingle fact of Chriſt's reſurrection, to prove the divinity of his miſſion. Wherein is ſhewn, that *Britannicus*'s argument does not anſwer the purpoſe for which it was intended: And in which is likewiſe ſhewn what was the great and main end that the reſurrection of Chriſt was intended to be ſubſervient to, *viz.* not to prove the divinity of his miſſion; but to gather together his Diſciples, to commiſſion and qualify and ſend them forth

forth to preach his Goſpel to all nations. Third, The caſe of *Abraham* with reſpect to his being commanded by God to offer his ſon *Iſaac* in ſacrifice farther conſidered; in anſwer to Mr *Stone*'s Remarks: In a letter to the Reverend Mr. *Stone*. Fourth, The equity and reaſonableneſs of a future judgment and retribution exemplified: or, a diſcourſe on the parable of the unmerciful ſervant, as it is related *Matt:* xviii. from verſe 23 to the end of the chapter.

IV. Some Obſervations offered to publick conſideration, occaſioned by the oppoſition made to Dr. *Rundle*'s election to the See of *Glouceſter:* In which the credit of the hiſtory of the old Teſtament is particularly conſidered. To which are added, firſt, An anſwer to Mr. *Stone*'s ſecond Remarks on the caſe of *Abraham* with regard to his being commanded by God to offer up his ſon *Iſaac* in ſacrifice: In a ſecond letter to the Rev. Mr. *Stone*, M. A. and Fellow of the learned ſociety of *Wadham* College in *Oxford*. Second, A diſcourſe on ſincerity; wherein is ſhewn, that ſincerity affords juſt ground for peace and ſatisfaction in a man's own mind, and renders his conduct juſtly approveable to every other intelligent being: Occaſioned by what Dr. *Waterland* has lately written on the ſubject: In a letter to a Gentleman. Thirdly, A ſupplement to the Tract entitled, *The equity and reaſonableneſs of a future judgment and retribution exemplified:* In which the doctrine of the eternal and endleſs duration of puniſhment to the wicked is more particularly and fully conſidered.

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A N

ENQUIRY

CONCERNING

REDEMPTION.

Wherein the

CHRISTIAN REDEMPTION

Is particularly conſidered.

To which is prefixed,

A PREFACE;

Wherein is ſhewn,

That if Chriſtianity be not founded on Argument, but on thoſe Divine Impreſſions that are made on Mens Minds concerning it, (as a late ingenious Author has attempted to prove;) then it is moſt uncertain and precarious, and cannot be reduced to any Standard. And in which is alſo ſhewn, that Chriſt's Kingdom has been ſo far from being ſupported, and eſtabliſhed by the Interpoſition of Civil Power; that on the contrary it has rather been annihilated thereby.

By THO. CHUBB.

LONDON:

Printed for T. Cox, at the *Lamb* under the *Royal Exchange*.
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N. B. A Collection of Tracts in one Volume in Quarto formerly publiſh'd, and ſeveral Tracts printed ſince, which now make two Volumes in Octavo, contain the Whole of Mr. *Chubb*'s Writings; of the latter may be had the Whole, or any particular Tract, if apply'd for in Time.

THE AUTHOR TO HIS READERS.

SIRS,

AS I intend to publiſh a *ſecond* Volume of Collection of Tracts, containing all thoſe Tracts which have been publiſhed ſince the publication of my *firſt* Collection; ſo I did intend to *add to*, and *conclude* that Collection with a diſcourſe, entitled, *The Author's Farewell to his Readers*; in which, I propoſed to take my leave of the world as a writer; but this *laſt part* of my deſign, ſome of my readers have diſſuaded me from, becauſe they are unwilling I ſhould *bar myſelf* from offering my thoughts to their conſideration at any time to come, whilſt my life ſhall be continued; and therefore in compliance with their deſire, that part of my deſign I have *dropped*: and now I intend to *conclude* the aforeſaid Collection with the following

lowing Enquiry, in which, *two points* of more principal note are inſiſted on, *viz. firſt*, That *penitence* is the *only ground* of God's mercy to ſinners; and *ſecondly*, That *this doctrine* is true Chriſtianity.

The *firſt* of theſe points is what *mankind at large* are concerned with, ſo that *Chriſtians* are not more particularly intereſted in it, but only in *common* with the reſt of the world; at leaſt it is what all *vicious perſons* are immediately intereſted in, of what denomination or profeſſion ſoever, ſuppoſing man to be an *accountable creature*, who will anſwer for his preſent behaviour in *futurity*. That many of our ſpecies have *greatly departed* from that *rule* of affection and action which man, as an intelligent, active, free being, ought to direct and govern his affections and behaviour by, and thereby have rendered themſelves *juſtly diſpleaſing* to God, and the *proper objects* of his reſentment, is a truth ſo obvious, as not to admit of a diſpute. This being the caſe, it muſt be a matter of the greateſt concern to mankind, at leaſt to all thoſe of our ſpecies, who have *acquired* ſuch a *depravity* of nature, as to render themſelves the *proper objects* of divine revenge, to know whether there be *any poſſible way* by which ſuch creatures may render themſelves the *proper objects* of God's mercy; and if there be ſuch a way, then the next important queſtion will be, *what that way is*. And in order to obtain proper ſatisfaction in the preſent caſe, it is to be obſerved,

that

that the forementioned queſtions are of *moral* conſideration, in which, the *character* and *conduct* of the Deity are concerned; and therefore theſe queſtions muſt be brought to their *proper teſt*, and be tried by the *ſtandard* of *moral truth*, *viz.* by that eternal and invariable rule of right and wrong, which reſults from the natural and the eſſential difference in things, in order to obtain ſuch ſatisfaction. All queſtions in every ſcience muſt be tried by the *principles* of that *particular ſcience* to which the queſtion ſtands related, and not by the principles upon which any other ſcience is grounded. Thus all queſtions in *geometry* muſt be tried or proved by or from thoſe *principles* upon which *that ſcience* is founded, and the like muſt be done in queſtions relating to gravitation or weight; it being very prepoſterous to pretend to try a propoſition relating to *meaſure*, by the principles of *gravitation*, or to pretend to try a propoſition relating to *weight*, by the principles of *menſuration*. In like manner, all queſtions of *moral* conſideration, in which the *character* and *conduct* of the Deity are concerned, of which thoſe before-mentioned are ſuch, theſe muſt be brought to their *proper teſt*, it being equally abſurd as in the forementioned caſes to pretend to try queſtions in *morals* by any other rule than what is the *ground* and *foundation* of *moral truth*, *viz.* the eternal and invariable rule of right and wrong.

If it ſhould be ſaid, that the queſtions under conſideration are *related to*, and are to be conſidered

ſidered as *parts* of *Chriſtianity*; and therefore the appeal ought to be made to the *Chriſtian revelation* with reſpect to them; becauſe the Chriſtian revelation is the *ground* and *foundation* of the Chriſtian religion, and conſequently is the *ſtandard* or *rule* of *truth* by which all queſtions are to be tried that relate thereto: Anſwer, All queſtions of *moral* conſideration muſt of neceſſity be brought to the teſt and be tried by the *ſtandard* of *moral truth*, becauſe that is *all the rule* they are ſubject to, or can be tried by, in order to obtain proper ſatisfaction; and this is equally the caſe, whether theſe queſtions ſtand related to any *traditionary* religion, or not. Morality is founded in nature *independent* of any revelation or traditionary religion, and is what *mankind at large* are intereſted in, and therefore Chriſtians ſtand upon a foot with the reſt of the world with regard to all queſtions relating thereto, and which is the caſe of the queſtions under conſideration. For, as thoſe queſtions are of *univerſal concern* antecedent to, and independent of all revelation or traditionary religion; ſo the nature of the thing requires that they ſhould be tried by a *rule* which mankind are *capable judges of*, antecedent to, and independent of any revelation or traditionary religion, a rule which is both *obvious* and *certain*, and which is *equally* ſo, whether any revelation or traditionary religion had ever taken place in the world, or not; and ſuch is the rule refered to. Beſides, as the natural and eſſential difference

in

in things exhibits a rule of affection and action which is, in order of nature, *prior* to all revelations and traditionary religions; ſo all revelations and traditionary religions muſt *themſelves* be brought to *this teſt*, and be tried by *this rule*, in order for us to form a proper and true judgment whether ſuch revelations, ſuch traditionary religions *are*, or *may be* of God, or not. For, as eternal reaſon and truth are *God's will*, or rather the rule and meaſure of the divine conduct; ſo all queſtions relating thereto muſt be brought to this teſt, and be tried by this rule, in order for us to form a proper Judgment concerning them. And if upon ſuch trial, any thing, any doctrine or propoſition ſhall appear to be *contrary*, or not *conſonant* to the *eternal reaſon* and *truth of things*; then ſuch contrariety is *a proof* that any ſuch thing, doctrine, or propoſition is not of God. So that ſhould thoſe queſtions ariſe, *viz.* whether the *Moſaick*, the *Chriſtian*, or the *Mahometan revelations*, and conſequently whether the reſpective *traditionary religions* grounded on thoſe revelations are of God, or not, thoſe queſtions muſt be brought to the forementioned teſt, and be tried by that rule; and if either of them will not abide ſuch trial, but is found *wanting*, then it ought to be *diſcarded* as an unhallowed thing, whether it be one, or another, or all of theſe. And if all revelations and traditionary religions muſt *themſelves* be brought to the aforeſaid teſt, and be *tried*, and *approved* by, or from *that rule*;

then,

then, ſurely, it muſt be greatly improper to ſet up revelation as a rule to judge of *propoſitions*, which are in *order of nature before* the rule itſelf, and which judgment concerning them, as grounded on revelation, derives *all its weight* from its *conformity* to the forementioned rule of right and wrong, without which conformity *ſuch judgment* would be of *no weight at all.*

Thus much I thought proper to premiſe, in order to *aſſiſt* my readers in forming a *true judgment* with regard to the important queſtions refered to; queſtions of ſuch importance that a *miſtake* with reſpect to them may wound religion in *its vitals*, and thereby prove *fatal* to mankind. For, tho' the doctrines of auricular confeſſion, purgatory, praying to Saints, bowing before an Image, tranſubſtantiation, and the like may be of very little conſequence with regard to mens future ſafety; becauſe a man may be a *good man*, or a *true penitent*, whether he be on one ſide of any of theſe queſtions, or on the other; yet if he ſhould be miſled with regard to what is the *true ground* of God's mercy to ſinners, then, if he be a *vicious* man, he may by ſuch error be *withheld*, or *prevented* from rendering himſelf the proper object of mercy, and thereby *fall ſhort* of that mercy; and thus his error may prove *fatal* to him.

And, as I have in the following diſcourſe laid down this propoſition, *viz.* That *penitence* is the *only ground* of God's mercy to ſinners; ſo I have alſo undertaken to maintain, that this doctrine

doctrine is *true Chriſtianity*. By its being true Chriſtianity, I mean that it is *a part* of that revelation of God's will which was made to mankind by the *miniſtry* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who was the *founder* of Chriſtianity. So that the queſtion with me, is not whether the fore-mentioned doctrine be *Peteriſm*, or *Pauliſm*; but only whether it be *Chriſtiſm*, or *Chriſtianity*; that is, the queſtion with me, is not whether the doctrine refered to was taught by St. *Peter*, or St. *Paul*, but only whether it was taught by *Jeſus Chriſt*. If a queſtion ſhould ariſe, what is the *diſpenſation* of *Moſes?* or what is the *diſpenſation* of *Mahomet?* that is, what are the doctrines which *Moſes* or *Mahomet* has diſpenſed to the world? then, I think, recourſe muſt be had to what *Moſes himſelf*, or to what *Mahomet himſelf* has ſet forth, in order to obtain proper ſatisfaction; and not to what has been ſet forth and declared by their immediate diſciples and followers. And the reaſon of this is obvious, *viz.* becauſe *Moſes* and *Mahomet* were *principals* with reſpect to each of their diſpenſations; whereas the diſciples and followers of theſe were at moſt but *ſubſtitutes*, who might poſſibly *go beyond*, or *fall ſhort* of the deſign and intention of their maſter. And if this is a proper way of proceeding, ſhould a queſtion ariſe, what is the diſpenſation of *Moſes?* or what is the diſpenſation of *Mahomet?* (as I preſume it will be allowed to be;) then ſhould the queſtion be, what is the *diſpenſation* of *Chriſt?* or what is *Chriſtianity?* recourſe, I

think, ought likewiſe to be had to what *Chriſt himſelf* hath ſet forth, and diſpenſed to the world, in order to obtain proper ſatisfaction, and not to what has been diſpenſed to the world by his immediate diſciples and followers; I ſay, this ought to be the caſe, for the *reaſon* beforementioned. And, as the queſtion under conſideration is what *Chriſtians* are more particularly intereſted in, and, as ſuch, it may perhaps be of more conſequence *to them* than to any other people in the world, as an error with reſpect to it may prove more fatal *to them* than to others; ſo for that reaſon, I think, it ought to be fairly and fully diſcuſſed, that if poſſible it may be brought to an iſſue. Beſides, the words *infidel*, *unbeliever*, *infidelity*, &c. which are uſed as terms of *reproach*, are bandied about, and men throw them at each other at random without any rule or reaſon, and thereby *unchriſtianiſe* each other before the point is ſettled what *real* and *true Chriſtianity* is; whereas till this point be ſettled upon its *proper foundation*, at leaſt till it is plainly and juſtly ſettled in a man's *mind*, which I am afraid is ſeldom the caſe, he is ſcarce a judge *for himſelf*, much leſs *for other men*, whether he is with regard to true Chriſtianity a *believer*, or an *unbeliever*, and ſo is in danger of erring in that reſpect; becauſe if he errs with regard to the *premiſes*, then he is likely to err with regard to the *concluſion* drawn from them; that is, if he ſhould judge true Chriſtianity to be what it really is not, then he may likewiſe

judge

judge himſelf to be a believer with reſpect to Chriſtianity, when in reality that is not the caſe.

Indeed, if *Chriſtianity* be not founded on *argument*, but on thoſe *impreſſions* that are made on mens minds concerning it, (as a very ingenious Author has undertaken to maintain;) then it may be both *various* and *contrary*, according to the images that are pictured on mens minds, by a divine impreſſion, concerning it. And as the *impreſſion itſelf* is the only evidence of its *divinity*; ſo Chriſtianity, in this view of the caſe, muſt be moſt *uncertain* and *precarious*, and cannot be reduced to any ſtandard. For if *God's ways* are not as *man's ways*, nor his *thoughts* as *man's thoughts*; and if the *wiſdom of men* be *fooliſhneſs with God*, and the *righteouſneſs of men*, (or what by the exerciſe of their diſcerning faculties appears to them to be ſo,) be *unrighteouſneſs with him*, (which are the *principles* this author reaſons from,) ſo that a man is not at all a judge of divine matters; then the divine impreſſions made on mens minds may be both *various* and *contrary* to *different perſons*, and to the ſame perſon at *different times*; and conſequently that muſt be Chriſtianity *for the time being* to every man, which is conſonant to the divine impreſſions *laſt* made upon his own mind, whether they agree with the impreſſions made on *other mens* minds concerning it, or not; and whether they agree with the impreſſions made on his own mind at *any time preceding*, or not;

I ſay, this may be the caſe. For tho' men may ſuppoſe and expect that *unity*, *uniformity*, and *invariableneſs* will take place with reſpect to Chriſtianity, as being conſonant to *man's wiſdom*; yet that may not be the caſe here, becauſe what is agreeable to, and is dictated by man's wiſdom may be *fooliſhneſs with God*, as well in this caſe as in any other, of which man is not a judge. So that *variety* and *contrariety* may take place with regard to Chriſtianity, as being the produce of *divine* impreſſion, for any thing we know, or can ſhew to the contrary; ſeeing *reaſon*, and *argument*, and the very *exerciſe* of our diſcerning faculties are not only *excluded* out of the caſe, but *cannot* anſwer any manner of purpoſe in it. Tho' it muſt be acknowledged, that this fully accounts not only for the *variety* and *contrariety* of *ſhapes* Chriſtianity has appeared in; but alſo for the *various* and *contrary* religions that have taken place in the world diſtinct from Chriſtianity, all which may have been the produce of *divine* impreſſion. For tho' it may be agreeable to *man's wiſdom* that there is, or can be but one true religion, and one acceptable way of worſhip, and one way for ſinners to be reconciled to God; yet this may be all *fooliſhneſs with God*. And tho' it may be agreeable to *man's wiſdom* that men ſhould act fairly and uprightly with each other, and that God ſhould act thus by his creatures; yet this alſo may be *fooliſhneſs with him*, and the *contrary to this* may be conſonant to *divine wiſdom*: I ſay, this

may

may be the caſe, for any thing we know; ſeeing *man* is not a *judge* of theſe things. If it ſhould be ſaid, that God has made known his will touching theſe matters, by a *divine* impreſſion on mens minds; in and by which he has declared himſelf *unchangeable:* Anſwer, As God may will *one thing to day*, and *another thing to morrow*; may declare himſelf *changeable to day*, and *unchangeable to morrow*; I ſay, as this may be the caſe, of which, upon the preſent ſuppoſition, we have no grounds from which we may fairly conclude the contrary; ſo nothing can certainly be concluded from *any* divine impreſſion on mens minds in any caſe whatever. Beſides, if Chriſtianity be grounded on theſe *impreſſions*, that are made on mens minds concerning it, then its *divinity* ſeems to reſt upon a precarious and uncertain foundation. For as the impreſſions on mens minds may be the reſult of the *human conſtitution* under the circumſtances in which each individual is placed; or they may be produced by the ſpirit of *truth*, or the ſpirit of *error*; and as man has no *certain rule* to judge by, whether any impreſſion on his mind be from one or another of theſe, nor indeed does the nature of the thing, in our preſent view of it, admit of any ſuch rule; ſo of courſe every man muſt be altogether *uncertain* whether any impreſſion on his mind be divine, or not; and conſequently whether what he receives as Chriſtianity from ſuch impreſſion be in reality Chriſtianity, or not. In fine, if *God's ways* are not as *man's ways*, nor

God's

God's thoughts as *man's thoughts*; and if the *wiſdom* of men be *fooliſhneſs* with God, and the *righteouſneſs* of men be *unrighteouſneſs* with him; then man is in a very *evil caſe*, whether *with*, or *without* divine impreſſions, as not having whereon to reſt the ſole of his foot with *ſafety*, but is with regard to *religion* in the utmoſt *difficulty* and *diſtreſs*. Upon the whole I obſerve, that if the author I refer to has *proved his point*; then, I think, the moſt *abſolute ſcepticiſm* in matters of religion will follow upon it, at leaſt ſo far as Chriſtianity is concerned. However, hear what Jeſus Chriſt ſaith, *Matt.* xii. 57. *Yea, and why even of yourſelves judge ye not what is right?* Theſe words ſeem at leaſt to imply that what *Chriſt offered* to the people was *level* to their *capacities*, and was what they were *capable judges of*, independent of any *foreign aid*; and therefore he addreſſed himſelf to their *underſtandings*, and put the queſtion to them, Yea, and why even of *yourſelves* judge ye not what is right? Whereas, if Chriſtianity is not founded on argument, but on thoſe *divine* impreſſions that are made on mens minds concerning it; then, I think, it would have been more *natural* and *pertinent* for Chriſt to have addreſſed his audience by way of caution and advice, in theſe or the like words: *Take heed that ye lean not to your own underſtandings, nor do you of yourſelves form any judgment about what I ſhall ſay to you, becauſe then you will certainly be miſled; but do you carefully attend to thoſe divine impreſſions that are made upon*

your

your minds, and do you rely on them only for your inſtruction and information. And indeed *preaching*, and *all other addreſſes* that are made to the *human underſtanding*, ſeem to be introduced only for *form ſake*; becauſe it is not that *outward* teaching that is addreſſed to, and that is received by the human underſtanding, but only that *inward* teaching by a *divine impreſſion* that does the work; which inward teaching the human underſtanding is not at all a judge of; and which ſurely would be as *powerful* and *efficacious*, whether any outward teaching took place, or not. And, as neither this *author* nor his *readers* can know, or judge any thing about *Chriſtianity*, neither *what it is*, nor *what it is not*, but by, or from a *divine impreſſion* on each of their minds, ſeeing, according to this author and St. *Paul*, no man knows or underſtands the things of God, but by the *Spirit of God* ſpeaking in him; ſo *all addreſs* to the human underſtanding, whether by *preaching* or *writing*, whether by St. *Paul* or by this *author*, ſeems at leaſt to be *vain* and *uſeleſs*. Nevertheleſs, I think, it muſt be allowed that the author has treated the ſubject with *openneſs* and *freedom*, and with a *maſterly hand*; and has produced much more reaſon and argument for *excluding* reaſon and argument from *Chriſtianity*, than the generality of men are maſters of; and therefore, I think, the performance is by no means deſpiſable, but is worthy the attention of our firſt-rate divines. Moreover, it is covertly a *proper* and *decent*

call

call to our clergy, not any longer to *play faſt* and *looſe* in an affair of ſuch moment; but either with this author *wholly to diſcharge* reaſon and argument from Chriſtianity, or elſe to be *wholly guided* by theſe in every thing relating thereto. And indeed there has been too much occaſion given for *ſuch a call as this*, as the conduct of ſome of our clergy has been moſt *prepoſterous* in this particular; for when reaſon and argument have been *neceſſary* to ſupport the *particular ſcheme* of religion they have adhered to, or the *particular intereſt* they have been engaged in, then reaſon and argument have conſtantly been *appealed to*; but when reaſon and argument have anſwer'd the *contrary purpoſes*, then they have been as conſtantly *exploded*. As to myſelf, I obſerve, that if Chriſtianity be not founded *on argument*, nor will bear to be *tried by it*, then, in my opinion, it cannot poſſibly be of *God*. For, as eternal reaſon and truth are God's will, or the rule and meaſure of the divine conduct; ſo conſequently whatever comes from him will admit of the *ſtricteſt ſcrutiny* by way of *reaſoning* and *argumentation*, ſeeing every thing that is of *divine original* has reaſon and truth for its baſis.

But to return. As Chriſtianity is allowed to be a matter of great importance to mankind, at leaſt it is allowed to be ſo by *Chriſtians*; ſo it muſt be a matter of moment to them to be *rightly informed* what *real* and *true Chriſtianity* is; at leaſt to fix the *ſtandard* to which teſt

all

all queſtions, all propoſitions muſt be brought, in order for us to form a proper judgment, whether they are true Chriſtianity, or not. This, I think, is what the caſe requires. I have, in my book, entitled, *The true Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt aſſerted*, ſhewed what I apprehend to be *true Chriſtianity*, as it is to be collected from *Chriſt's miniſtry*; but then, this has been repreſented to be *deiſm*, * *heatheniſm*, &c. I therefore intreat thoſe who think, or at leaſt who have repreſented me as not having done *juſtice* to the ſubject, that they would kindly interpoſe for the ſettling this point, by ſhewing what the *ſtandard is* by which all things are to be tried, in order for us to judge whether they are Chriſtianity, or not; and alſo by ſhewing what *true Chriſtianity is*, as built upon that foundation. Only I beg leave to obſerve, that it will be paying a very low compliment to Chriſtianity, to repreſent it as conſiſting of *doctrines* which will not *tally* with *truth*, and which were not taught by its *founder*. Tho', I think, this is not more prepoſterous than for the diſciples of Chriſt to *hector* and *bully* in their maſter's cauſe, whilſt they pay no regard to the *laws* and *precepts* he has left them to govern their affections and actions by. For, tho' the *Rechabites* paid a ſtrict regard to the commandments of *Jonadab* the Son of *Rechab*, their father, and neither drank wine, nor built

* See the reverend Dr. *Stebbin*'s viſitation Charge, to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of *Wilts*.

houſes, nor planted vineyards, nor ſowed ſeed, but dwelt in tents all their days; (*Jer.* xxxv. 6.) yet in this Chriſt's diſciples *beg leave to be excuſed.* The Chriſtian ſcholar can, out of the abundance of his zeal, deify the perſon of his maſter, and bow down his head like a bulruſh at the very mention of his name; can have faith or confidence in him out of meaſure, and pray to him without ceaſing; can cut and ſlay hereticks and infidels under the pretext of his authority, and can ſay, and do *any thing*, and *every thing* for his ſake, ſave *governing* his *affections* and *actions* by his *maſter's laws*; ſuch obedience being, in his opinion, no other than *dry morality*, which is too low and mean, and fitter for a *mere heathen*, who has nothing but his *virtue* to truſt to, than for an *angelick ſoul*, who is to be carried to heaven on the wings of his own *faith*, or perhaps in the fiery chariot of his own *zeal*, having laid *faſt hold* of the *mantle* or *merits of his maſter*, which will procure an entrance for him. And, that this is the truth of the matter, a little obſervation will ſhew, by comparing the *precepts* of Chriſt with the *lives* of thoſe who call themſelves his followers; in which compariſon *great contrariety* will appear, and that not in a few inſtances only, but in a multitude of caſes. So that whatever *advantage* Chriſtianity may have been to mankind in *former times*, it does not appear to turn to any *great account* to them *now*; ſeeing, taking mankind in general, Chriſtians are not much better than other men. And

indeed

indeed things ſeem to be quite reverſed. For inſtead of the kingdoms of *this world* becoming the kingdom of *God*, and of his *Chriſt*; the kingdom of Chriſt is become the *kingdoms of this world*. The kingdom of Chriſt at preſent, at leaſt that kingdom which is called after his name, is founded in *civil policy*, is ſupported by *civil* or *worldly power*, and is made ſubſervient chiefly, if not wholly, to *worldly purpoſes*. Whereas the *real* and *true kingdom* of Jeſus Chriſt is quite of another nature, it is a kingdom which is not *of*, nor *from this world*; it is a kingdom ſet up in the *hearts* of men, by which their affections and actions are *voluntarily ſubjected* to Chriſt's laws, independent of all external *compulſion*, and all other *authority*.

To conſtitute a *true diſciple* of Jeſus Chriſt, or a true ſubject of his kingdom, *two* things are abſolutely neceſſary, *viz. firſt*, to *believe*, or at leaſt to *admit* that Jeſus Chriſt was appointed of God to make known his will to mankind touching the true way to God's favour and eternal life; and *ſecondly*, in conſequence of ſuch faith or admiſſion to conform his *affections* and *actions* to Chriſt's laws, the latter of theſe being altogether as neceſſary to ſuch a character as the former. *Ye are my friends*, (ſaith Chriſt, *John* xv. 14.) *if ye do whatſoever I command you*; by which is plainly implied, that he who does not do what Chriſt has commanded is no friend, no diſciple of Chriſt, nor no ſubject of his kingdom. So

that it is doing what Chriſt *commands*, becauſe *Chriſt* has commanded it; and not becauſe it is commanded by ſome other authority, which conſtitutes a *true ſubject* of Chriſt's kingdom. *Matt.* xxiii. 8, 9, 10. *Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Maſter, even Chriſt; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called maſters, for one is your Maſter, even Chriſt.* Whatever authority is aſſumed among Chriſtians with regard to God's favour and eternal life, in order to direct and influence the underſtandings and conſciences, the affections and actions of Chriſtians, whether it be called *civil or eccleſiaſtical, temporal or ſpiritual*, all ſuch coercive power is not the *kingdom of Chriſt*, but the *ſubverſion*, or rather the annihilation of it; becauſe ſo far as men are directed and influenced by ſuch authority, ſo far the kingdom of Chriſt is *ſunk* and *loſt* in them. St. *Paul* puts a queſtion, *Rom.* vi. 16. *Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourſelves ſervants to obey, his ſervants ye are to whom ye obey?* Now, tho' St. *Paul* differently applied the propoſition here laid down; yet that alters not the caſe, becauſe the apoſtle laid it down as an *univerſal propoſition*, which holds good in all caſes; and he appealed to the common ſenſe and reaſon of the believers at *Rome* for the truth of it. Know ye not? which is the ſame as to ſay, that this is a thing ſo obvious that you all

muſt,

muſt, and *do know* it, that to whom ye yield yourſelves ſervants to obey, his ſervants ye are to whom ye obey. So that Chriſt's kingdom is ſo far from being *ſupported* and *eſtabliſhed* by the Interpoſition of *civil power*, that on the contrary it is in a great meaſure *annihilated* thereby. Whatever *authority* is the *ground* of our ſubmiſſion, that is our *maſter*; and therefore to whomſoever a *man*, a *Chriſtian* yields obedience, *his ſervant*, *his ſubject* he is to whom he yields that obedience; whether it be to *Jeſus Chriſt*, or *Ceſar*. Indeed, the blending together, or the unnatural coalition of *church* and *ſtate*, has anſwered very great purpoſes to men in this world; ſuch as that thoſe who *puſh hard*, and *get foremoſt* in this pretended church and kingdom of Chriſt, have their *hundreds* and their *thouſands per* year for now and then attending at the altar, as they affect to call it; live in palaces like kings, cloath themſelves * in fine linen and coſtly apparel, and fare ſumptuouſly every day; ſit in the uppermoſt rooms at feaſts, receive greetings in the markets, and are called, Rabbi, Rabbi; and, no doubt, thoſe who *ſhare* in ſuch good things think them worth contending for, and ſay in their hearts, with the *three*

* *Matt.* x. 24, 25. *The diſciple is not*, (ought not to be) *above his maſter, nor the ſervant above his Lord; it is enough for* (or it ought to ſuffice) *the diſciple that he be as his maſter, and the ſervant as his Lord*; and if ſo, then this enquiry is very natural, *viz.* what reſemblance is there betwixt gilded mitres, lawn ſleeves, embroidered copes, or ſcarlet *hoods, and the* plain, ſeamleſs coat of Jeſus Chriſt?

three diſciples at Chriſt's transfiguration, *Lord, it is good for us to be here*; for tho' heaven is allowed to be a very good place, or ſtate, which may be fit to be *retired to*, when this world's good things can be enjoyed *no longer*; yet, according to the proverb, *A bird in the hand is worth two in the buſh*, and therefore to make ſure play, they chuſe to poſſeſs themſelves with as much of this word's good things as is poſſible to be obtained by them, and then to take their *chance* for the riches of another. But then, tho' in *ſome ages and countries* the *ſtrict alliance offenſive* and *defenſive* which church and ſtate have entered into *againſt poor mankind*, has been productive of ſuch great and good things as thoſe above mentioned; yet thereby *Chriſt's kingdom* has been, as it were, *joſtled out of the world*; ſeeing ſo far as civil power has interpoſed, and has been to Chriſtians a ground and reaſon of action, ſo far *Chriſt's authority*, and *Chriſt's kingdom* have been *depreſſed*. And tho' the *ordinances* and *miniſtry* founded in, and ſupported by civil power, may in a looſe and very improper ſenſe be called *Chriſtian*, as thoſe who exerciſe ſuch power are *called after Chriſt's name*; yet ſtrictly ſpeaking theſe are not the inſtitutions and miniſtry of Chriſt, but only of that power by which they are founded and ſupported. And ſuppoſing ſuch ordinances and miniſtry be *like unto*, and are of the *ſame kind* with what was inſtituted by Jeſus Chriſt; yet that alters not the caſe, becauſe ſuch likeneſs and ſimilitude

makes *no alteration* with reſpect to the *authority* upon which it is grounded; for as that authority is *merely civil*, ſo conſequently every thing muſt be *merely civil* that is grounded upon it, and ſupported by it. And indeed, it is but too common for men profeſſing Chriſtianity, to be juſt as good Chriſtians as the civil power *requires* and *obliges* them to be; or perhaps as *comports* with, or is *ſubſervient* to their worldly intereſt; beyond which, too often Chriſt's precepts ſtand for cyphers. For, tho' *the ſtatutes of* Omri *are kept, and all the works or laws of the houſe of* Ahab, *and men walk in their counſels*, Mic. vi. 16; yet *the precepts of Chriſt lie quite unregarded.* Hear the charge which Chriſt gives to his diſciples, *Lay not up for yourſelves treaſures upon the earth, where moth and ruſt corrupt, and where thieves break through and ſteal; but lay up for yourſelves treaſures in heaven, where neither moth nor ruſt corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and ſteal.* Again, *When thou makeſt a dinner or a ſupper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinſmen, nor thy rich neighbours, * leſt they bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makeſt a feaſt, call the*

* As in the eaſtern countries, a *loftineſs* of *ſpeech* was ſometimes uſed, in which *more* was *expreſſed* than was intended to be *underſtood*; ſo I am willing to ſuppoſe, that in this text Chriſt did not intend to bar his diſciples *totally* from that friendly ſociety in eating and drinking (with their neighbours, friends and relations, whether of high or low degree) thoſe good things which God hath prepared

the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou ſhalt be bleſſed; for they cannot recompence thee, but thou ſhalt be recompenced at the reſurrection of the juſt. Theſe, with many others, are the precepts of Jeſus Chriſt, which he hath given in charge that his diſciples and followers ſhould walk by, which precepts are read in our ſynagogues every ſabbath-day; and yet not the *leaſt regard* is paid to them by many of our *moſt zealous* and *orthodox Chriſtians*, even whilſt they are *anathematizing hereticks* and *ſchiſmaticks*, *deiſts* and *infidels:* and the reaſon of this is obvious, *viz.* becauſe thoſe precepts tend to *retard*, rather than to *promote* their *greatly abounding* in worldly poſſeſſions and enjoyments, which with too many of them is the *main point*,

pared to be received with thankſgiving, and which *friendly aſſociation* is one of the *great comforts of life*; I ſay, I am willing to ſuppoſe Chriſt did not intend this; becauſe, I think, *ſuch a precept* would be *wrong*; tho' I am ſenſible the text is very *plain* and *expreſs*, both as to the prohibition, and the injunction, and as to the reaſons urged to ſupport both. But then, ſurely, nothing leſs than this can be intended, *viz.* that when a Chriſtian has made *proper proviſion* for *himſelf* and his *immediate dependents*, he is not to beſtow the *ſurplus* of his *fortune* upon the *rich* and *wealthy*, becauſe they are not the objects of his care, nor he of theirs, and therefore nothing ſhould be expected from them one to another; but upon the *poor* and *needy*, who have it not in their power ſufficiently to provide for themſelves; and yet the text in this *reſtrained* and *limited ſenſe* ſeems to be but little regarded by the *rich* and *wealthy*, either *living* or *dying*, who uſually beſtow much the greateſt part of what they are poſſeſſed of, not to thoſe who *want*, but to thoſe who *abound* in worldly good things. As to the *propriety* of this precept in this *limited ſenſe*, I muſt ſubmit it to the judgment of my readers.

point, notwithſtanding all their harangues about *futurity*, as their lives do plainly demonſtrate. Nevertheleſs, it muſt ſurely be allowed to be greatly prepoſterous for men who call themſelves *Chriſtians*, and who would think themſelves *injured* to be deemed otherwiſe, more eſpecially for the *miniſters of Chriſt*, to lay up riches *heap upon heap*, as if, like the *Babylonians* of old, they intended therewith to build a *tower* that ſhould *reach to heaven*; when *ſuch ſelfiſhneſs*, *ſuch worldly-mindedneſs* was what Chriſt ſhewed himſelf chiefly concerned to *reform mankind from*. Now, if the ambaſſadors of Chriſt, (as they affect to be called) who have, or at leaſt who pretend to have received the *Holy Ghoſt* by the impoſition of hands, and to have been ſent upon a *ſpecial meſſage* from heaven, *viz.* to warn their brethren that they go not to the *place of torment*, if theſe men pay little or no regard to the commandments of Chriſt, but live as if they had *no ſuch matter*, which is too much the caſe; then ſurely it muſt be allowed, that the caſe of the multitude profeſſing Chriſtianity *is not much better*; for if theſe things be done in the *green tree*, then what ſhall be done in the *dry*? and conſequently *Chriſt's kingdom* muſt be come to a *very low ebb*. From what I have obſerved my readers may ſee, that *Chriſtendom*, or Chriſt's kingdom, is not of that *great extent* which it may be thought to be, as containing *all*, or *almoſt* all *Europe*, and *part of Aſia*, *Africa*, and *America*, which makes a great ſound; whereas

if none are the ſubjects of Chriſt's kingdom, but thoſe who govern their affections and actions by Chriſt's laws, which is the truth of the caſe, then *Chriſtendom* will be reduced into a *much narrower* compaſs.

I will add but *one* obſervation more, which I hope my readers will patiently attend to. As it is become faſhionable to *abuſe*, *vilify*, and *miſrepreſent* thoſe perſons, whom crafty and evil-minded men are pleaſed by way of reproach to characterize by the terms *freethinkers*, *deiſts*, *infidels*, &c. ſo to render thoſe perſons the more *contemptible*, they are frequently charged with refuſing to aſſent to what they cannot comprehend in *matters of religion*; whilſt at the ſame time (ſaith their accuſer) thoſe very perſons do aſſent to what they cannot comprehend in *things natural*. This is the charge. And to illuſtrate ſuch prepoſterouſneſs of conduct in the freethinkers, ſeveral inſtances are produced, in which they are ſaid to aſſent to what they do not comprehend. Tho', by the way, it is not in any man's power, whether he thinks *freely* or *otherwiſe*, to carry his aſſent farther than what he comprehends, in any caſe whatever. By the term *comprehend*, I think, the ſame is meant as by the term *underſtand*. If I have a juſt and true idea of all the terms which conſtitute this propoſition, *viz.* That the three angles of a right-lined triangle are equal to two rectangles, then I underſtand the propoſition, and then I comprehend it. What I comprehend I underſtand,

and what I underſtand I comprehend; and what I do not comprehend, that I do not underſtand, and what I do not underſtand, that I do not comprehend; the terms being, I think, ſynonymous. This being premiſed, I proceed to a caſe which is uſually urged, in which it is pretended that the freethinker gives his aſſent to what he does not underſtand in *things natural*; and at the ſame time he refuſes to give the like aſſent to what he does not underſtand in *matters of religion.* The caſe is this. [*That mind acts upon matter*] is the propoſition laid down; this propoſition, ſays the accuſer, the freethinker aſſents to, and yet he does no more underſtand *how mind acts upon matter, than he underſtands the greateſt myſtery in religion*; and thus the freethinker, to appearance at leaſt, ſtands convicted of the charge laid againſt him, *viz.* That in things natural he gives his aſſent to what he does not underſtand, tho' he refuſes the like aſſent in matters of religion. This ſort of legerdemain, if it may be ſo called, I have often known practiſed in the pulpit. The firſt propoſition introduced is [*that* mind acts upon matter,] with reſpect to which the preacher ſets forth, that this propoſition the freethinker aſſents to. Now admitting this to be the caſe; yet notwithſtanding the freethinker is quite clear of the charge laid againſt him; becauſe with reſpect to this propoſition his aſſent does not go a *tittle farther* than what he underſtands. He underſtands this propoſition clearly and perfectly

well, *viz.* [*that mind acts upon matter*;] and as he throughly underſtands it, ſo he can aſſent to it, ſuppoſing he is convinced of its truth. But then, as the juggler at the ſtage, when he has ſhewn *one bag* to the ſpectators, and has turned it inſide outward, and has done whatever elſe is neceſſary to convince them that there is nothing in it, he then *puts it by*, and introduces *another bag* like the former, out of which he takes a hen, and chickens, and whatever elſe it was ſtored with; and this change of bags is done ſo *artfully* and *quick*, as not to be perceived by the ſpectators: ſo that (to appearance) the ſame bag which appeared to be *empty*, in an inſtant of time as plainly appeared to be *full*, tho' it did not appear that *any thing* had been put into it: in like manner, when the preacher has ſhewn off with the *firſt* propoſition, *viz.* [*that* mind acts upon matter,] and has obſerved that it is what the freethinker aſſents to; he then artfully *drops it*, and introduces another propoſition in its ſtead, *viz.* [*how* mind acts upon matter;] which *ſecond* propoſition, tho' it varies from the *firſt* but in *one word*, yet they are as diſtinct and different as the *two bags* that were by turns in the hand of the juggler, the one empty, and the other full. The preacher having thus introduced his *ſecond* propoſition, *viz.* [*how* mind acts upon matter,] he then diſplays his talent, in ſhewing that this is what the freethinker *does not*, nor *cannot underſtand*, which is alſo true; but then, this is what the freethinker

does

does not, nor *cannot aſſent to*, tho' the preacher by his art leads the people to think that he does. For, tho' the freethinker aſſents to this propoſition, *viz.* [*that* mind acts upon matter,] becauſe he underſtands it, and is convinced of its truth; yet he does not give his aſſent to this propoſition, *viz.* [*how* mind acts upon matter,] becauſe he does not underſtand it. And thus the preacher, by a *ſudden* and *artful change of the propoſitions*, (which if not attended to, may appear to be the ſame) leads the inattentive audience to think, that the freethinker does really give his aſſent to what he does not underſtand, and therein lies the preacher's dexterity. The caſes are parallel. For as in the *former* caſe, the trickſter, by a ſudden and artful change of the bags, miſleads and impoſes upon the *ſenſes* of the ſpectators; ſo in the latter, the preacher, by a like ſudden and artful change of the propoſitions, miſleads and impoſes upon the *underſtandings* of his audience. I will repeat the caſe, that ſo if poſſible my readers may not fail of ſeeing through it. [*That*] *mind acts upon matter*, this, ſays the preacher, the freethinker aſſents to; and yet [*how*] *mind acts upon matter, he no more underſtands, than he does the greateſt myſtery in religion.* Here, by the ſudden and artful change of the word [that] for the word [how], by which a change is made in the propoſitions, the audience, (at leaſt thoſe of them that do not ſee through the diſguiſe,) are *miſled*, and freethinkers are *abuſed*. The true

ſtate

ſtate of the caſe is this, namely, that as the *firſt* propoſition, *viz.* [*that* mind acts upon matter] may be underſtood by *all thinkers*, whether *free* or *fettered*; ſo it may be aſſented to by them all, provided they are ſatisfied of its truth. Again, as the *ſecond* propoſition, *viz.* [*how* mind acts upon matter] is not underſtood by *any thinker*, whether *bound* or *free*; ſo it cannot poſſibly be aſſented to by any of them. Who is there among the multitudes of mankind that believes *how*, or *in what manner mind acts upon matter?* ſurely there is no ſuch perſon. And the reaſon is obvious, *viz.* becauſe *how*, or *in what manner mind acts upon matter* is not *underſtood* by any man, and therefore cannot poſſibly be *believed* or aſſented to by them. And this is the caſe in *all other inſtances*, with reſpect to which no man can carry his faith or aſſent a *tittle farther* than he underſtands; and if any man pretends that he can, he either puts a fallacy on himſelf, or elſe impoſes on others. Thus I have ſhewn, how through *craft* and *baſeneſs* freethinkers are abuſed. To think freely is to take an *impartial view* of any queſtion, and of every thing that ſtands *related* to that queſtion, whether it makes *for it*, or *againſt it*; and to form a judgment *agreeably* to the evidence that appears, excluſive of every *bias* that may miſlead the mind in forming that judgment; this is *freethinking*, and thoſe who act thus are *freethinkers*, and are in reality an *ornament* to human nature, and to civil ſociety; and as ſuch,

viz.

viz. as freethinkers, ſurely, are not plagues nor peſts to either, however they may be maliciouſly repreſented; ſeeing freethinking does not diſpoſe nor lead them thereto. Nevertheleſs, I am ſenſible that in *this age* freethinking is ſet forth to be moſt *ſcandalous* and *reproachful*; and perhaps my thinking ſo freely on the ſubjects treated of in the following Enquiry, may draw on me that character, which I aſſure my readers, I am not aſhamed of; becauſe to think freely is, in my opinion, a reputable thing. Indeed a Chriſtian prieſt, *viz.* the reverend Mr. *Warburton*, in his high ſtrain of *ſcandal* and *defamation*, (tho', I hope, in this reſpect prieſts of all religions are not the ſame) has been before-hand with me in this particular; in his preface to his Critical and Philoſophical Commentary on Mr. *Pope*'s Eſſay on Man, in which he has expreſſed himſelf in the following words.

" As for the tribe of Freethinkers, *Toland*,
" *Tindal*, *Collins*, *Coward*, *Blount*, *Strut*, *Chubb*,
" *Dudgeon*, *Morgan*, *Tillard*, and their fel-
" lows, the mortal foes both of reaſon and
" religion, injured wit as well as virtue, by
" the mouth of one of their happieſt advo-
" cates, long ago called for vengeance on
" them.

" ———The licence of a following reign
" Did all the dregs of bold *Socinian* drain;
" Then unbelieving prieſts reform'd the nation,
" And taught more pleaſant methods of ſalvation;

" Where

" Where heaven's free ſubjects might their rights diſpute,
" Left God himſelf ſhould ſeem too abſolute.
" Encourag'd thus, wit's *Titans* brav'd the ſkies,
" And the preſs groan'd with licens'd blaſphemies.
" *Theſe monſters, criticks, with your darts engage,*
" *Here point your thunder, and exhauſt your rage.*"

Here my readers will ſee, that Mr. *Warburton* charges me with being a *mortal foe* both of *reaſon* and *religion*, *injured wit* and *virtue*; with reſpect to which charge I obſerve, that as on the one ſide, I have not, and I truſt I ſhall not, join in any *religious party* or *faction* whatever againſt truth; ſo on the other ſide, the *cauſe* of reaſon, religion and virtue I have ſincerely and uprightly endeavoured to *promote*; and if in any of my enquiries I have *erred*, from which I do not pretend to be exempt, as ſuch error is what I have endeavoured to guard againſt, by examining *carefully* and *impartially* thoſe queſtions that have come before me; ſo I am quite eaſy in that reſpect, even whilſt under the expectation of *futurity*. And as to injured wit, if I have done nothing for it, I have done nothing againſt it; conſequently, if I have not been its *friend*, I have not been its *foe:* with what face then could this *man*, this *reverend preſbyter of our church*, lay the above imputation upon me? or what *principle* is there, upon which he can *juſtify* his conduct

conduct in ſo doing? this I am at a loſs to diſcover. As the above charge is moſt *heavy*; ſo it requires the *cleareſt* and *ſtrongeſt proof* to ſupport it; and yet, I know, Mr. *Warburton* has not, nor can he have wherewith *juſtly* to ground this his preſumptive charge upon; and therefore when he bringeth his *gift* to the *altar*, when he approacheth with reverence the *holy table*, to make a publick and ſolemn profeſſion of his *diſcipleſhip* to *Chriſt*, and, as it were, to *ſwear fealty* to him as his *Lord*; and alſo to join with the body of the faithful in offering up an *euchariſtical ſacrifice* to God; I hope he will then and there remember, that *I have* * *ought againſt him*, *Matt.* v. 23, 24. But then, whether this *great divine* does, or will think himſelf concerned to pay ſuch a regard to that rule of action given by *Jeſus Chriſt*, which is here refered to, by acting as a *Chriſtian*, conſonant to this precept given to Chriſt's diſciples conſidered as *Jews*, the event only can ſhew. If † Mr. *Warburton*, by the *pub-*

* Tho' I have heard, that the *church of Rome* teacheth, that *faith* is not to be kept with *hereticks*; yet I have not heard, that the *church of England* teacheth, that *juſtice* is not due, nor need be paid to *freethinkers*; and therefore, I hope, Mr. *Warburton* will not plead a right of *indulgence*, nor claim an *exemption* from doing juſtice *even to me*, ſuppoſing he ſhould *diſown* my ſtanding in *any brotherly* relation to him.

† In an Appendix to my Diſcourſe on Miracles I ſtiled the reverend Mr. *Warburton* Dr. *Warburton*, apprehending that he had obtained a title to the appellation of Doctor,

publication of the above-cited *paragraph*, intended to give the world a ſpecimen of the *effect* that his *faith* in Chriſt and in the doctrine of futurity, has upon his *mind* and *life*; then, I think, every honeſt man will have reaſon to join with me in this petition, *viz.* From *ſuch believers*, good Lord, deliver us.

whereas in this I was miſtaken; but then as it was thro' *ignorance* I did it, ſo I truſt Mr. *Warburton* will forgive me this wrong: tho', (if I have been rightly informed) *that feather* has ſince been denied this *great man*, by one of our univerſities, after much ſollicitation for it.

AN ENQUIRY CONCERNING REDEMPTION.

BEFORE I enter upon this Enquiry, *two* or *three* things are neceſſary to be premiſed as previous to it. As *firſt*, That there is a *natural*, * and an *eſſential* difference in things; and that *that difference* is the ground and foundation of *moral truth*: So that with reſpect to all queſtions of moral conſideration, our *arguments* and *reaſonings* muſt be grounded on *this principle*, in order to render ſuch arguments and reaſonings *pertinent*, and of any *weight*. For, were it

* See this point more largely conſidered in my diſcourſe, intitled, The Sufficiency of Reaſon in Matters of Religion *farther conſidered*.

to be admitted that there is a univerſal ſameneſs, or indifference in things, and that one thing is not diſtinct from, or is not preferable to another in nature; then the conſequence is clear, that the diſtinctions of right and wrong, of good and evil, of truth and falſhood, of juſt and unjuſt, and the like, are *idle* and *vain*, becauſe *nature* does not admit them; or, at leaſt, if they are admitted, it is to no manner of purpoſe, becauſe right and wrong, good and evil, juſt and unjuſt, truth and falſhood, *&c.* are all upon an *equality* as being in themſelves perfectly *indifferent*, one not being preferable to another. So that upon a ſuppoſition there is a univerſal ſameneſs, or a univerſal indifference in nature, *all morality* is ſunk and loſt; and all queſtions of *moral* conſideration become abortive; and all arguments and reaſonings with regard to *moral truth* amount to juſt nothing at all. It will anſwer no manner of purpoſe to enquire after, or attempt to prove that a thing is right, or wrong; good, or evil; true, or falſe; if right and wrong, good and evil, truth and falſhood are the *very ſame thing*; or if one of theſe is not *preferable* to another in nature. If the communication of good or happineſs be the very ſame thing with the communication of evil or miſery, or if theſe are ſo perfectly indifferent, as that one is not preferable to the other; then all argumentation with reſpect to them muſt be *vain* and *uſeleſs*. From what I have obſerved, I think, it plainly appears that as the natural and

and eſſential difference in things is the ground and foundation of *moral truth*; ſo of neceſſity this principle muſt be admitted as the *foundation of argument* in all queſtions relating thereto. Again,

Admitting there is a natural and eſſential difference in things, and that one thing is really diſtinct from, and is preferable to another in nature; then it is God's being conſtantly, uniformly, and univerſally affected, and acting *agreeably* to ſuch difference which conſtitutes the *divine rectitude* or the *moral* perfections of the Deity; that is, it denominates God to be perfectly wiſe, juſt, good, *&c.* So that in all queſtions relating to the character and conduct of the Deity, our arguments and reaſonings muſt be grounded on this principle, (*viz.* that God's affections and actions are always perfectly conformable to the eſſential difference in things) in order to render ſuch arguments and reaſonings *pertinent*, and of any *weight*. For, admitting that the divine affections and the divine will and power are influenced by, and are under the direction of capricious humour and arbitrary will, which is the ſame as to ſay, that they are under no direction or guidance at all, but that God is affected, and acts at *random* without any rule or reaſon; I ſay, were this to be admitted, then the conſequence is clear, that the divine rectitude or the moral perfections of God are *fictitious* things. Then it will be very improper, or rather abſurd to attribute wiſdom,

goodneſs,

goodneſs, &c. to the Deity; becauſe, if that were the caſe, then God would be affected, and would act from *mere humour*, which is the ſame as from no principle at all; and conſequently the forementioned appellations of wiſe, good, juſt, &c. could not, with any propriety, be *applicable to him*. So that upon a ſuppoſition the Deity is affected, and acts, not conſonant to that rule of affection and action which reſults from the natural and eſſential difference in things, but from arbitrary will, as aforeſaid; then divine rectitude or the moral perfections of God are *ſunk* and *loſt*; and then all arguments and reaſonings with reſpect to theſe, will be *idle* and *vain*. It will be to no manner of purpoſe to enquire whether any diſpenſation, and ſcheme of religion be of God, or not; becauſe, upon the preſent ſuppoſition (*viz.* that God is affected and acts from ſovereign pleaſure) we have no principle to reaſon from, no foundation for argument from which any thing may *juſtly be concluded* in ſuch a caſe. It would be very abſurd to argue for, or againſt any diſpenſation or ſcheme of religion being of God from its being *agreeable with*, or *contrary* to wiſdom, goodneſs, juſtice, &c; becauſe wiſdom and folly, good and evil, juſt and unjuſt, one of theſe is as *eligible*, as *conſiſtent with*, and as *likely* to be *choſen*, or *recommended* by ſovereign pleaſure and arbitrary will, as another. And, on the other ſide, if it be admitted that the divine affections, the divine will and power are, at

all times, and in all inſtances and caſes, *influenced by*, and are *directed* by that law or rule of affection and action which reſults from the natural and eſſential differences in things; then here is a *proper* ground and foundation for argument, from which *juſt* and *rational* concluſions may be drawn with regard to the conduct of the Deity in all his diſpenſations or dealings with his creatures. If this principle be admitted, then here is a *proper teſt* for all diſpenſations, all ſchemes of religion, to be brought to, and be tried by, in order for us to form a judgment whether they are *divine*, or *not*; and by which we may be guarded from *deluſion* and *impoſition*, at leaſt from all that is *injurious* and *hurtful* to mankind; becauſe whatever diſpenſation or ſcheme of religion is plainly *repugnant* to divine rectitude, ſuch diſpenſation, ſuch ſcheme of religion cannot poſſibly be of God.

And, that the Deity is conſtantly, uniformly, and univerſally affected, and acts (whenever he does act) *agreeably* to that rule of affection and action which reſults from the natural and eſſential differences in things, is moſt apparent. For, as God is the *moſt perfect intelligence*; ſo he muſt of neceſſity *moſt clearly diſcern* the right, or wrong; good, or evil; truth, or falſhood; *&c.* and alſo the preferableneſs, or non-preferableneſs of each of theſe to its contrary, which takes place in all inſtances and caſes through the whole univerſal nature; I ſay, this *muſt* be the caſe with reſpect to God,

God, who is the moſt perfect intelligence. And, as the Deity does moſt clearly perceive as aforeſaid; ſo the divine affections, and the divine will and power are *conſtantly* guided and directed by that diſcernment. That is, when God acts, he *always* chuſes to act right, and to do good, *but never* the contrary; he *always* loves what is lovely, and hates what is hateful, *but not* their contraries; he *always* pities the proper objects of pity, and ſhews mercy to the proper objects of mercy, *but not* to their contraries; and ſo in all other caſes. I ſay, this will *always* be the caſe with reſpect to God; not from any *fatality*, not from any *natural neceſſity* he is under to be affected, and to act thus, but becauſe there is a *reaſon* reſulting from the natural difference in things *why* he ſhould be affected, and act thus, and a *reaſon againſt* his being affected, and acting contrarily; nor does nature afford a motive, a temptation, an excitement to the Deity to be affected, or to act otherwiſe, and therefore we may well be aſſured that that never will be the caſe.

Having thus prepared the way, by ſhewing what muſt be admitted as a ground or foundation for argument with reſpect to all queſtions of *moral* conſideration, and all queſtions with which the *character* and *conduct* of the Deity is concerned; I now proceed to the Enquiry, *viz.* concerning Redemption. The words redeem and redemption are ſometimes applied to *things*, and ſometimes to *perſons*. When one

man

man puts his goods into the poſſeſſion of another, as a *pledge*, *pawn*, or *ſecurity* for a ſum of money he has borrowed of that other perſon, till ſuch time as he ſhall pay the money again; then when that money is *thus payed*, the goods pledged or pawned as aforeſaid are *redeemed* thereby. Again, when a man is become a *vaſſal* or ſlave to another, and his liberty is *purchaſed*, then he is *redeemed*: and, as what was *paid* for the man's liberty is the *price* of that redemption, ſo *he* who pays that price is the *ſlave's* redeemer.

This is the common, obvious, and ſtrict literal ſenſe of the words redeem and redemption, when applied to things or perſons: ſo that in a *literal* redemption, with reſpect to *perſons*, (if I may be allowed to expreſs myſelf thus, which perhaps may be very improper) there muſt be a *literal ſlave*, or a perſon in a ſtate of *literal ſlavery* to a *literal maſter*, and alſo a *literal price*, or valuable conſideration paid by a *literal redeemer* to that *literal maſter*, in order to purchaſe a *literal redemption* to that *literal captive*; I ſay, all this muſt take place when the words redeem and redemption are taken in a *ſtrict literal ſenſe*, and are applied to *perſons*. So that when a perſon has by his miſbehaviour rendered himſelf the *proper object of reſentment*, and in conſequence thereof is reſerved or bound over to *puniſhment*, the being any way *inſtrumental in ſaving* that man from puniſhment, cannot in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe be called *redemption*; nor can he who is

inſtrumental in ſaving the offender from puniſhment, be ſtrictly and properly called a *redeemer*, becauſe the perſon thus diſcharged was not a vaſſal or ſlave, but a criminal. Miſbehaviour or diſobedience to any law does not conſtitute a *captive*, but a *criminal*; and conſequently the being *inſtrumental* in ſaving a perſon from that puniſhment his diſobedience has expoſed him to, cannot *properly* be called redemption; nor can *he* who is inſtrumental in ſaving ſuch a perſon, be *properly* called a redeemer; but thoſe terms, when thus applied, muſt be uſed in a *looſe*, *remote*, *improper*, or *figurative* ſenſe. And,

As the terms redeem and redemption are improperly and figuratively applied, when applied to the diſcharging a perſon from the puniſhment his miſbehaviour has expoſed him to; ſo, I think, it will be proper to enquire what that *miſbehaviour is*, which juſtly expoſes the offender to puniſhment. Miſbehaviour or ſin may be thus briefly defined, *viz.* It is the *doing that* which in reaſon *ought not* to be done, or the *omitting to do* what in reaſon *ought to be done*. Now, tho' ſin, according to this definition, is in every inſtance the proper object of *diſlike* and *diſapprobation*; yet, I think, it does not in every inſtance render the agent the proper object of *reſentment* and *puniſhment*. Vengeance, revenge, reſentment and puniſhment, as they are terms of like import; ſo they all ſuppoſe ſome *injury* or *wrong done* either to the perſon, character, or fortune of another, or the

the *omitting to do* what ought to have been done for the *ſupport*, and in the *defence* of either of theſe. So that revenge or puniſhment is the *retaliation* of injury and wrong, or the rendering *evil for evil*; and therefore in thoſe inſtances of miſbehaviour or ſin, where no *injury* or *wrong* is done, nor intended to be done to *another*, nor any *defect of benevolence* to others takes place, there can be no *reaſonable ground* for vengeance or puniſhment; becauſe there is *no evil*, either negative or poſitive, done to another, to be revenged; that is, there is no evil done to be the *ground* of revenge or puniſhment. Suppoſe a man inattentively did a thing which terminated in his *own hurt*, when he intended it for his *own good*, and no kind of good was done thereby either to himſelf or others; and ſuppoſing he might *eaſily* have diſcovered what would be the conſequence of his action, if he had duly conſidered the caſe; in this inſtance his behaviour would be juſtly *diſapproveable*, becauſe no man ought in reaſon to contribute *needleſsly* to his own hurt, and becauſe every man ought in reaſon to *look forward*, and conſider what will be the natural conſequences of his actions. But then, as in this caſe the man's action terminated in his *own hurt only*, and no kind of injury was done, nor intended to be done to any other, nor indeed did he intend to do hurt to himſelf; therefore, I think, he cannot be the *proper object* of vengeance or puniſhment to any other intelligent being; his weakneſs, folly, or ſin,

in this caſe would render him the object of *pity* rather than of *puniſhment*. Such ſin or miſbehaviour as denominates the ſinner, *not baſe*, but *fooliſh only*, may render the agent worthy to be *deſpiſed*, worthy of *contempt*, but not of puniſhment. In fine, a *fooliſh ſinner*, and a *baſe*, *villainous ſinner*, are *two* different characters, and are worthy of different treatment. For, as ſin, in theſe different caſes, ſprings from *different cauſes*, and produces different effects; ſo the former merits *contempt only*, and the latter both *contempt* and *puniſhment*. And, if we conſider God as the great governor of the intelligent and moral world, who will certainly act ſuitable to ſuch a character; then, moſt certainly, he will execute vengeance upon none *but ſuch* to whom vengeance and puniſhment is truly and properly due. Again,

Man is ſo conſtituted, and in ſuch circumſtances, as that it is *great odds* but he will be unreaſonably injurious to others in ſome inſtances, even againſt the general bent of his mind, and the tenor of his actions. For, as the appetites and paſſions that take place in man, and are a part of the human conſtitution, are, in many caſes, the *ſprings* of action; ſo thoſe appetites and paſſions are, ſometimes, ſo *ſuddenly* and *ſtrongly* raiſed, as that men are *hurried on by them* to do what is juſtly blameable and injurious to others, before their attention is called in to enable them to conſider what they are doing; this, I ſay, is ſometimes

the caſe. And, tho' men ought to *conſider firſt*, and *act afterwards*; yet, as I ſaid before, it is *great odds* but in ſome inſtances the caſe will be otherwiſe with all men, nor can it well be expected that it will not. So that when a man *through* the *weakneſs* and *frailty* of nature becomes in ſome leſſer inſtances unreaſonably injurious and hurtful to others, againſt the general bent and diſpoſition of his mind, and the tenor of his actions, and as ſoon as he is come to himſelf is ſenſible of, and ſorry for his miſbehaviour, and repairs the injury ſo far as it is in his power, and makes his miſcarriage a reaſon to himſelf to be more watchful of his behaviour in time to come, I ſay, I think, ſuch a ſinner cannot be the *proper object* of divine revenge. For, tho' a man's fault, in ſuch a caſe, when conſidered *abſtractedly* from the circumſtances which are ſuppoſed to attend it, that is, ſuppoſing thoſe circumſtances did not attend it, may render him the proper object of *divine revenge*; yet when *thoſe circumſtances* do attend the caſe, then, I think, ſuch a man would rather be the object of compaſſion and mercy. And, were we to ſuppoſe that God would execute vengeance upon *ſuch offenders* whoſe faults are circumſtanced as aforeſaid, it would be the ſame as to ſuppoſe that God does not act according to *rectitude*, or the reaſon of things; becauſe the reaſon of things does require that *all circumſtances* ſhould be taken into the caſe, and that the agent ſhould be treated accordingly. I am ſenſible it is a much *higher*

and *nobler* character, and that it muſt appear ſo to the Deity, and therefore it may be differently treated by him, for a man to paſs thro' the ſeveral ſtages of life *without offending at all*, than to offend under the forementioned circumſtances. But then, admitting this to be *poſſible*; yet perhaps it has *never* been the caſe, nor can it well be expected that it ſhould, as I have already obſerved. And, were ſin, under the forementioned circumſtances, made the *ground* of divine revenge; then mankind would be placed in a moſt *hazardous* ſtate, and it would have been *much better* for them never to have exiſted, becauſe *non-exiſtence* is certainly preferable to a ſtate in which it would be ten thouſand to one againſt a man, that is, it would be *ten thouſand to one* for his being doomed to a ſtate of miſery, and he would ſcarce have a *chance* for the contrary. This, ſurely, would be a very *great hardſhip* upon mankind; and *ſuch* a conſtitution of things, and *ſuch* a conduct grounded upon it as is here ſuppoſed, would be the produce of *great unkindneſs*, and would, moſt certainly, be *contrary* to rectitude.

But then, if neither the *fooliſh ſinner*, that is, he whoſe ſin denominates him to be, not vicious, but weak and fooliſh only,. nor the *injurious ſinner*, when his miſcarriages are circumſtanced as aforeſaid, are the proper objects of divine vengeance, the queſtion ſtill remains, *who are?* And, the anſwer to this queſtion, *(to me,)* is moſt apparent; *viz.* Thoſe who

from

from an *unreaſonable ſelfiſhneſs* and *baſeneſs of mind*, not only with-hold their hands from doing that good to others that they ought, but alſo viciouſly and cruelly contribute to their hurt; who from a vile diſpoſition *afflict* and *grieve* their neighbours, by injuring them in their perſons, their characters, or their fortunes, without any *juſt ground*; and who introduce that *evil* and *miſery* into the world, which they ought, in reaſon, according as they have power or opportunity, to prevent, or remove. Theſe men *oppoſe* and *fruſtrate* the gracious purpoſe of our kind Creator in calling this world into being, by their becoming *common enemies* to the *common good*; theſe men are deſignedly and deliberately injurious and hurtful to the intelligent and moral world, and thereby render themſelves the proper objects of *reſentment* to every intelligent being, and conſequently to the Deity as ſuch; theſe are the men upon whom, in reaſon and equity, *evil* ought to be *retaliated*, and to whom *vengeance* or *puniſhment* is due. And tho' God cannot poſſibly be a *ſufferer* by the evil that is done to his creatures, and therefore none can be the objects of puniſhment to him on that account; yet, as the happineſs of his creatures was the great end of their creation, and in that reſpect God is *greatly intereſted* in their *weal*, or *woe*; ſo whoever deſignedly *oppoſes* and endeavours to *fruſtrate* this grand deſign, ſuch men render themſelves the *proper objects* of *divine revenge*. And tho', in the execution of *civil juſtice*, and

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conſequently in the diſtribution of *civil revenge*, the forementioned *diſtinction* may not always be made, becauſe *civil governors*, to whom the diſtribution of civil revenge is committed, cannot in every caſe be able to diſcover, whether the *injury done* reſulted wholly from the *infirmities* and *frailty* of nature, and was circumſtanced as aforeſaid, or whether it was the reſult of a *baſe* and *vicious* mind; yet as God, who is the *moſt perfect intelligence*, has a clear and perfect knowledge of every one's caſe, ſo he will certainly *take every thing* into the account, and deal with his creatures accordingly. And,

Here I beg leave to take notice of a vulgar error, (at leaſt it appears ſo to me) which has prevailed among Chriſtians, *viz.* That mankind became liable or ſubject to *death* and *mortality* thro' the *ſin* of our *firſt parents*; whereas according to all the appearances of nature this was the caſe antecedent to, and independent of ſuch ſin. The *whole vegetable* and *animal* creation are in their *own natures mortal*, by, or from the original conſtitution of things. Each ſpecies of vegetables, whether produced from ſeed or otherwiſe, receive nutriment, grow up and increaſe, till they come to the higheſt perfection their natures will admit, under the circumſtances in which each individual is placed; and then they *gradually decay*, and come to a *diſſolution*, either ſooner or later, according as that decay may be haſtened by the circumſtances which attend them. And, as it

is

is with the vegetable, ſo it is with the animal creation; each ſpecies, whether produced from ſeed or otherwiſe, receive nutriment, grow up and increaſe till they come to the higheſt perfection their natures will admit, under the various circumſtances in which each individual is placed; and then they *gradually decay*, and come to a *diſſolution*, either ſooner or later according as that decay may be haſtened by the circumſtances which attend them. This is apparently the caſe with reſpect to the various ſpecies of *animals* that inhabit this globe, of which the ſpecies of *mankind* are a *part*, and from which, *in this reſpect*, they do not appear to *differ at all*; at leaſt, this appears to be the caſe of all thoſe ſpecies of animals which come within the reach of human obſervation. So that had food been with-held from our firſt parents for a long time, or had thoſe fluids upon which the animal life depends been totally ſtagnated, or totally diſcharged from their bodies, even whilſt in a ſtate of *innocence*; then *death* would unavoidably have enſued, according to thoſe ſettled laws by which the animal creation has been governed. Beſides, as man was, by the original conſtitution of things, deſigned and qualified to *increaſe* and *multiply*; ſo *mortality* ſeems *neceſſary* to ſuch a conſtitution, that one generation might paſs away, in order to give place to another. For, had our firſt parents and their poſterity been *perpetuated* in their original vigorous ſtate; then the increaſe of mankind

would have been ſo *great* as that this *globe* could not long have been a proper habitation, nor afforded a ſuitable proviſion for them; whereas if man is by, and from his original conſtitution a *mortal creature*, then the fore-mentioned *inconvenience* is ſufficiently guarded againſt. I am ſenſible it is pretended that in a proper time each individual of our ſpecies would have been *tranſlated* to ſome other place in the univerſe, in order to make way for others to *ſucceed* them here; but then this is introducing *one ſuppoſition* that has no ſort of evidence to ſupport it, in order to make good *another ſuppoſition* which is equally inſupportable.

I am alſo ſenſible it may be urged that St. *Paul* taught this doctrine, *viz.* that *all mankind* became *mortal* through *Adam*'s tranſgreſſion, as in 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. *For ſince by man came death, by man alſo came the reſurrection from the dead. For as in* Adam *all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.* To which it may be anſwered, admitting St. *Paul* did teach this doctrine in the words refered to, and alſo that he taught this doctrine, *viz.* that mankind became or were made *ſinners* by *Adam*'s *diſobedience*, and were, upon *that account*, bound over to *condemnation*, as in Rom. xv. 18, 19. *Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even ſo, by the righteouſneſs of one, the free gift came upon all men unto juſtification of life. For as by one man's diſobedience many were made ſinners; ſo by*

by the obedience of one, ſhall many be made righteous. I ſay, admitting that St. *Paul* taught thoſe doctrines in the words refered to, (which ſeems to be the caſe, at leaſt the latter ſeems to be as plainly taught as the former) then the queſtion will be, Whether St. *Paul*'s *authority* is ſufficient to build thoſe doctrines upon, ſeeing the latter is plainly *repugnant* to truth and reaſon, and the former is *contrary* to all the obvious appearances of nature. What St. *Paul* grounded his ſentiments upon, in the caſes refered to, cannot certainly be determined. To ſay that St. *Paul* received thoſe doctrines by a *ſpecial revelation* from God, or that he wrote his epiſtles by *divine inſpiration*, is ſaying what thoſe who urge it have no authority for, have no evidence to ſupport; and if St. *Paul* did teach thoſe doctrines, then this is a plain proof of the *contrary*; becauſe it may fairly be preſumed that God has not, neither will he be the *parent* of any doctrines that are *erroneous*, and therefore not of thoſe above-mentioned, which plainly appear to be ſuch: I ſay, which plainly appear to be ſuch, that is, erroneous. For, as the former of thoſe doctrines is *contrary* to all the obvious appearances of nature, and therefore is erroneous; ſo the latter is *contrary* to truth and reaſon, and is therefore erroneous. It is contrary to *truth* that *Adam*'s poſterity became or were made ſinners by *Adam*'s ſin, becauſe ſin is wholly perſonal, and cannot be transferred from one to another: and it is repugnant to *rectitude* to condemn one for

the offence of another, and therefore it is what God will not do. Now if thoſe doctrines are erroneous, as they plainly appear to be, then we may well be aſſured that God has no way been concerned in the *propagation* of them.

And here, before I proceed, I think it proper to ſtate the notion of *innocence*, in order to prevent its being over-valued. Innocence is, (if I may ſo ſpeak) a *mean* betwixt *doing evil* and *doing good*, or betwixt vice and virtue; ſimple innocence being neither. The former of theſe, *viz. doing evil* juſtly expoſes to *puniſhment*, except the evil done be circumſtanced as before-mentioned; and the latter, *viz. doing good* merits *reward*; whereas *ſimple innocence* intitles to neither. If I, from a baſe and evil mind, take away the life of a man, which life ought to have been preſerved; by ſuch an action I become *injurious* to the intelligent world, and juſtly expoſe myſelf to *vengeance* or *puniſhment*. Again, if I ſhould be an inſtrument in *ſaving* the life of a perſon, who had behaved properly in ſociety, and therefore ought to live, which life I was not particularly intereſted in, by this I ſhould become a *benefactor* to the intelligent world, and the intelligent world would become in reaſon obliged gratefully to *return the kindneſs* when power and opportunity ſerve, which return of kindneſs is properly called *reward*. But if I do *neither* of theſe, it not having been in my *power* to have done the latter, then I am *innocent* with reſpect to the former, that is, I am not

not guilty of *murder*; which innocence, as it hath nothing of *evil* in it which would juſtly expoſe me to vengeance or puniſhment, ſo it hath nothing of *good* in it which would render me worthy of recompence or reward. And tho' (as I have already obſerved) God cannot receive either *good* or *evil* from his creatures, and therefore they cannot be to him the *proper objects* of reward or puniſhment on that account; yet, as God called this world into being on purpoſe that his intelligent creatures might taſte pleaſure of various kinds, and be made happy thereby, and in that reſpect he is *intereſted* in their weal or woe; ſo whoever *kindly promotes*, or *baſely diſappoints* that end, does thereby render himſelf the *proper object* of divine reward, or divine puniſhment: whereas in all thoſe parts of a man's conduct, in which he is *innocent only*, or in which he has done neither *good*, nor *evil* to others, * he cannot poſſibly be the proper object of either. Upon the whole I obſerve, that as the doing good, or the doing evil to others, are the only *proper* grounds for rewards and puniſhments, whether theſe be conſidered as private, or publick, as human, or divine; ſo ſurely ſimple innocence, in which neither of theſe take place, cannot be a *proper* foundation for either. But to return,

Having

* When a man does good or evil to himſelf, as he only is intereſted in that good or evil; ſo the action itſelf carries with it its own reward or its own puniſhment, and that I think is all which, in reaſon and equity, the caſe *requires*.

Having before ſhewed what it is which renders a creature the *proper object* of divine vengeance, I now proceed to enquire whether there is any thing *in nature* that can render ſuch a creature the *proper object* of mercy. And firſt, let it be admitted for argument's ſake, that there is nothing in nature which can render ſuch a creature the proper object of mercy, in order to ſee how the caſe will ſtand upon that ſuppoſition. And if this be admitted, *viz.* that when a creature has rendered himſelf the proper object of divine revenge, there is nothing in nature which can render that creature the proper object of mercy; then the conſequence is clear, *viz.* that God will not ſhew *mercy* to ſuch a *creature*; he will not *remit* neither in whole nor in part that *puniſhment* his ſins have juſtly expoſed him to, but will execute vengeance to the *full* according as his crimes deſerve. I ſay this will be the caſe, becauſe this is following *nature*, and acting *properly*; whereas were God to act otherwiſe, that is, were he to ſhew mercy to a creature which is not the proper object of mercy, but of vengeance and puniſhment, it would be altogether as *prepoſterous*, and as *contrary* to rectitude, as it would be for him to *love* a creature who is the proper object of his *hatred*. Again, let it be admitted on the other ſide, that when a creature has rendered himſelf the proper object of divine revenge, there is ſomething in nature which will render that creature the proper object of mercy; I ſay, let this be

admitted

admitted in order to ſee how the caſe will ſtand upon this ſuppoſition. And if this be admitted, then when ſuch a creature has rendered himſelf the proper object of mercy, God will moſt certainly ſhew *mercy* to that creature; I ſay, this will certainly be the caſe; becauſe this would be following *nature*, and acting *properly*, whereas were God to act otherwiſe, that is, were God to with-hold his mercy from a creature who had rendered himſelf the proper object of mercy, this would be as *preposterous*, and as *contrary* to rectitude, as it would be for God to *hate* the creature who had rendered himſelf the proper object of his love. This, I think, is as plain and evident in morals, as any propoſition in mathematicks can be. By mercy, in this caſe, I mean the *remitting* that *puniſhment* in whole or in part which the offender had juſtly expoſed himſelf to. Not to ſhew mercy to a creature who has rendered himſelf the proper object of mercy, is to be *unmerciful*; which is contrary to rectitude, and is juſtly blameable. To be unmerciful is to *with-hold* mercy *when*, and *where* mercy ought to be ſhewn, which is the preſent caſe.

But then, if it be admitted that there is ſomething in nature which will render ſuch an offender, as is here refered to, the proper object of mercy, the queſtion will be what that ſomething is? Whether it be ſomething *inherent* in him, or whether it be ſomething *external* to him: And, in order to find *ſatisfactory* anſwers

ſwers to theſe queſtions, it will be neceſſary to enquire what it is, which is the *true ground* of divine revenge? Whether it be ſomething inherent in the creature, or ſomething external to him? I ſay, this is abſolutely neceſſary to be enquired into, becauſe it is the *removing* or *taking away* the grounds of divine revenge, which muſt make *way for*, and which can only render ſuch a creature the *proper object* of mercy; for otherwiſe that creature will *continue* to be the proper object of revenge, until vengeance has been *fully ſatisfied*. But this I have enquired into already, and have ſhewn what it is which renders a creature the proper object of divine revenge; namely, it is oppoſing the great end of creation, by becoming a common enemy to the common good, from an habitual baſeneſs or vileneſs of mind; I ſay, from an habitual baſeneſs or vileneſs of mind, becauſe the *evil actions* refered to muſt not be conſidered abſtractedly from the *bad diſpoſition* they ſpring from, ſeeing that diſpoſition denominates and conſtitutes them to be what they are, *viz. evil actions* in a moral ſenſe, and ſeeing it is the evil diſpoſition of mind thoſe actions ſpring from, which renders the agent the *proper object* of divine revenge. And as the true and only ground of divine vengeance is *internal* and *perſonal*; ſo of neceſſity the true and only ground of the divine mercy muſt be *internal* and *perſonal* alſo; becauſe it is the taking away of the *former*, which is the ground or reaſon of the *latter*, as I have already

ready obſerved. And as the *doing good* and the *doing evil*, which are the only proper grounds of reward and puniſhment, are both *perſonal*, and cannot be *transfered* to another; ſo it is apparently contrary to rectitude to *afflict one* for the *offences of another*, or to ſhew mercy to *one* for the virtues of *another*, this being to act greatly *improper* in either caſe. He that does *evil* from an evil *diſpoſition*, does thereby juſtly expoſe *himſelf*, and himſelf *only*, to *puniſhment*; and were *evil* to be inflicted on *another* upon that account, ſuch evil would be inflicted from an *improper* motive, and without any *juſt* ground, and therefore would be wrong. In like manner, he that does *good* from a virtuous or good *diſpoſition* of mind, does thereby render *himſelf*, and himſelf *only*, worthy of *recompence* or *reward*; and were mercy ſhewn to *one* on the account of, and by way of return for the good done by *another*, this would be ſhewing mercy to that perſon from an *improper* motive, and without any *juſt* ground, and therefore would be wrong alſo. And, as the ground of divine mercy muſt of neceſſity be internal and perſonal; ſo the queſtion before us is, what it is in nature which can be the ground of that mercy? But this branch of the ſubject I have already largely conſidered, in my Enquiry concerning the ground and foundation of religion, (to which I refer my reader) and therefore I ſhall here only tranſcribe what I have there offered as the ſum of the argument.

" I have already obſerved, that puniſhment
" is relative to guilt, the latter of theſe being
" the ground and foundation of the former. I
" have likewiſe obſerved, that actions derive
" their guilt, not from their effects and con-
" ſequences, but from their cauſes; that is,
" from thoſe evil or vicious diſpoſitions of
" mind, which are the ground and cauſe of
" them. I have further obſerved, that when
" once guilt is contracted, it can never be
" *taken away*; that is, when *once* an evil ac-
" tion has been committed, that action can-
" not be *undone*, nor can it ever be otherwiſe
" but an *evil action*, and conſequently, the
" perſon who committed it muſt continue to
" *have been* guilty of that evil action to all
" eternity, at leaſt, ſo long as he ſhall con-
" tinue to exiſt. And this is the caſe upon
" *all ſchemes*, whether the *criminal* ſuffers the
" puniſhment his crime deſerves, or whether
" we admit the abſurd ſuppoſition of *another's*
" ſuffering in his ſtead, or whether his puniſh-
" ment be *remitted*, in whole, or in part.
" But then, tho' an evil action cannot be *un-*
" *done*, but muſt continue to *have been* com-
" mitted to all eternity; yet that *evil diſpoſi-*
" *tion of mind* out of which it ſprang, (and
" which denominates and conſtitutes it to be
" an evil action in a *moral* ſenſe) may be *put*
" *away*, and when that is the caſe, then he
" that before was the *proper object* of puniſh-
" ment, by this, *ceaſes* to be ſuch, and be-
" comes thereby the *proper object* of mercy.

" For

" For as in things *natural*, take away the " cauſe, and the effect *will* ceaſe; ſo in things " *moral*, take away the cauſe, and the effect " *ought* to ceaſe. A man in a ſtate of *po-* " *verty* is the proper object of *relief*, and " therefore *ought* to be relieved: but then, " take away the cauſe, and the effect *ought* to " ceaſe; that is, change his circumſtances, by " putting him into a ſtate of *plenty*, and then " he *ceaſes* to be the proper object of relief, " and therefore *ought not* to be relieved. In " like manner, a man who, from a *wicked* " diſpoſition of mind, has been guilty of a " wicked action, becomes thereby the *proper* " *object* of puniſhment: but then, take away " the cauſe, and the effect *ought* to ceaſe; that " is, change his circumſtances by removing " that *wicked* diſpoſition of mind which took " place in him, and which was the *cauſe* of " his miſbehaviour, and then he *ceaſes* to be " the proper object of puniſhment, and be- " comes *thereby* the proper object of mercy. " For when the *grounds* of reſentment and " puniſhment *ceaſe*, which is the caſe here, " then, in reaſon and equity, reſentment and " puniſhment *ought* to *ceaſe* alſo. And it would " be the ſame abſurd conduct, to *puniſh* a man " after he is become a *penitent*, for his having " *before* been *guilty* of an evil action, as it " would be to *relieve* a man in a ſtate of *plen-* " *ty*, for his having *before* been in a ſtate of " *poverty*. This *change* of *circumſtances* in an " offender, changes his *character* and *relations*.

" For, whilſt he was under the power of *vi-*
" *cious* affections, and was *diſpoſed* to gratify,
" and *did* gratify them to the publick hurt,
" he was then an *evil* and *vicious creature*,
" and an *enemy* to the intelligent and moral
" world, and, as ſuch, was the *proper object*
" of reſentment and puniſhment. But when
" he became *changed* as aforeſaid, he then
" *ceaſed* to be that *evil* or *vicious* creature,
" and is become *virtuous* and *good*, (or at leaſt
" he is prepared and diſpoſed to be ſo) he is
" no longer an *enemy*, but is (or is diſpoſed to
" be) a *friend* and a *benefactor* to the intelli-
" gent world as far as it is in his power, and,
" as ſuch, he is no longer the proper object of
" *reſentment* and *puniſhment*, but is become by
" the *forementioned change*, the proper object
" of *compaſſion* and *mercy*. So that if the
" Deity will follow nature, and be guided by
" it, (which he moſt certainly will) then he
" muſt deal with ſuch a creature according to
" what *he is*, and not according to what he
" *has been*; he muſt deal with him not as an
" *offender* conſidered *ſimply as ſuch*, which
" would render him the proper object of *pu-*
" *niſhment*, this not being his *whole character*;
" but he muſt and will treat him as a *penitent*
" *offender*, that being his *whole character*, and
" the *preſent* ſtate of his caſe, and, as ſuch,
" he is the *proper object* of God's *mercy*. To
" ſay, in this caſe, that the penitent offender
" *ſtill continues* to have been guilty of the
" crimes he has committed, and therefore, he

" ought

" *ought* to be *puniſhed*, this is weakly urged;
" becauſe, (as I have already obſerved) that is
" the caſe upon *all ſchemes*, and therefore it
" ought not to be urged here; and is the ſame
" kind of reaſoning as to ſay, that the man
" who has been in a ſtate of poverty, tho' his
" circumſtances are changed, and he is now
" in a ſtate of plenty; yet he *ſtill continues* to
" be the man who has been in a ſtate of po-
" verty, and therefore *ſtill* ought to be relie-
" ved; the weakneſs of which, I think, ap-
" pears at firſt ſight. From what I have ob-
" ſerved, I think, my readers cannot avoid
" ſeeing what it is which renders men, who
" have, by their *greatly departing* from that
" *rule* of action they ought to be governed by,
" rendered themſelves *juſtly* diſpleaſing to their
" Maker; I ſay, I think, my readers cannot
" avoid ſeeing what it is which will render
" *ſuch offenders* the *proper objects* of God's *mer-*
" *cy*; and conſequently will be the *ground* of
" the divine mercy to them. Namely, it is
" paſſing through *ſuch a change*, which, (to
" ſpeak in the figurative language of the New
" Teſtament) is called a *being born again*; be-
" coming a *new creature*; being *created anew*
" in, or according to Chriſt Jeſus; and the
" like. Whatever offender paſſes through *this*
" *change*, he thereby *ceaſes* to be the *proper ob-*
" *ject* of puniſhment, and becomes the *proper*
" *object* of mercy; and therefore, we may be
" aſſured, he will moſt certainly obtain it at
" God's hand."

I am ſenſible, that what I have before laid down is not admitted by a *late ingenious writer* on this ſubject, who, tho' he allows that *penitence* renders the offender the proper object of *mercy*; yet were God to ſhew mercy to him, it would be to act contrary to *rectitude*, and therefore that cannot be the caſe. This, I preſume, it will be expected I ſhould take notice of, in order to do *juſtice* to the *ſubject* before me. The author has obſerved, that were God to ſhew *mercy* to the *penitent offender*, this would be treating *penitence* and *innocence* alike; which as they are *different* characters, that require *different* treatment, ſo to treat them *alike* muſt be contrary to *rectitude*. To this I beg leave to add, that were God to puniſh the *penitent offender*, this would be treating *penitence* and *impenitence* alike; which as they are *different* characters, (*much more* different than penitence and innocence) that require *different* treatment, ſo to treat them *alike* muſt be contrary to *rectitude* alſo. The *latter* of theſe obſervations, I think, is as *juſt* as the *former*, and both of them together ſeem to bring the Deity under this dilemma, *viz.* that he *muſt act contrary to rectitude*, let him act which way he will. For, if God ſhews *mercy* to the penitent, then he acts contrary to rectitude, by treating penitence and innocence *alike*; or if he *puniſhes* the penitent, then he alſo acts contrary to rectitude, by treating penitence and impenitence *alike*, and this makes the caſe look almoſt deſperate. However, I am not altoge-

ther

ther without hope of clearing the divine conduct of this difficulty.

And, in order thereto, I obſerve, that to *admit* the ſuppoſition, that it is contrary to rectitude for God to ſhew mercy to the proper objects of mercy, is *greatly abſurd*. To *love* the proper objects of love, and to *hate* the proper objects of hatred, is not only *agreeable* with rectitude, but is really *rectitude itſelf*. In like manner, to ſhew *mercy* to the proper objects of mercy, is ſo far from being *contrary* to rectitude, that it is perfectly *agreeable* with it; yea, it is *rectitude itſelf*. And tho', in this caſe, penitence and innocence are treated *alike*; yet it will not follow, that penitence is treated *otherwiſe* than it ought to be. By being treated *alike*, in the preſent caſe, muſt be meant being put upon the *ſame foot* with regard to *God's favour*; becauſe otherwiſe they are not treated alike, ſeeing penitence is *forgiven*, whereas innocence *is not*, nor does it *ſtand in need* of forgiveneſs. I have already obſerved, that innocence is a *mean* betwixt *doing evil* and *doing good*, or betwixt virtue and vice; that as it does not expoſe a man to any *puniſhment*, ſo neither does it entitle a man to any *reward*; ſimple innocence therefore in point of *morality* is a mere negative; it does neither evil nor good, and riſes no higher than *bare exiſtence*. I farther obſerve, that *penitence*, tho' it entitles the penitent perſon to a diſcharge from *puniſhment*, that is, it renders him *worthy* of ſuch a diſcharge; yet it does not entitle him to, or render

render him worthy of any *reward.* For, if any reward comes into the caſe, that reward ariſes wholly from the *virtue* that was *previous* to penitence, or *conſequent* upon it. By reward here is meant ſome *poſitive good*, and not *forgiveneſs* or a diſcharge from *puniſhment*, which penitence is here ſuppoſed to render the penitent offender worthy of. And, as by *penitence* a creature is born again into a ſtate of *innocence*, that is, innocence for the *time preſent*, tho' not for the time paſt; ſo their *affinity* in this reſpect renders it proper, that they ſhould be treated *alike.* Penitence *changes* a bad man into a good man, at leaſt it puts him into a ſtate in which he is as much *diſpoſed* to goodneſs, as if he were in a ſtate of innocence, that is, as if he had never tranſgreſſed. Yea, perhaps *more*, becauſe, (according to the proverb, A burnt child dreads the fire,) the penitent is *more likely* to be upon his *guard*, than if he were in a ſtate of innocence, ſeeing he has experienced the *ſad effects* of the contrary. And this obſervation ſeems to be juſtified by the conduct of our *firſt parents* when in a ſtate of innocence, than which, ſurely, none were ever *more eaſily* betrayed into folly than they, when in their innocent ſtate. However, I think, it may juſtly be ſaid, that penitence does *as much* diſpoſe a man to virtue and goodneſs as innocence, and as ſuch they are *alike* the objects of God's favour, and as they are to make their *fortunes* as their *future virtue* ſhall deſerve, ſo ſurely the putting them upon *ſuch*

a foot cannot be contrary to rectitude. And, tho' the penitent perſon has *contracted guilt*, which the innocent perſon has not; and tho' penitence does not, nor cannot *undo* what has been done, it cannot *annihilate guilt* when once contracted; yet it can and does remove from the guilty perſon, thoſe *evil* or *vicious diſpoſitions* which were the ground and cauſe of guilt; it can and does render the offender the *proper object* of mercy; it can and does *reſtore* the guilty perſon to *a ſtate*, which to all intents and purpoſes is the ſame as *innocence*, or at leaſt is equal in value to it. And,

Here I beg leave to obſerve, that in common language we often ſpeak of the *qualities*, or *properties* of action, as if they were real *ſubſtances*; and of what is *paſt*, as if it were *preſent*. Thus, we ſay that *guilt* cannot be *annihilated*, whereas guilt being only the *nonconformity* of action to *rectitude*, or to that *rule* which action ought to be conformed to, reſulting from a *baſe* and *evil mind* as its ground and cauſe, it is not the ſubject of annihilation. And thus, we ſpeak of guilt as *preſent*, whereas when the guilty action *ceaſes*, the *guilt* or *nonconformity* of that action to its rule *ceaſes* with it. It would be equally as abſurd to ſuppoſe, that when an action *ceaſes*, the *guilt* (which is only a property) of that action *continues*, as it would be to ſuppoſe, that when a ſpherical body *ceaſes*, the *ſphericalneſs* (which is only a mode or property) of that body *remains*: whereas the truth is, that as when a ſpherical

body is *annihilated*, then *ſphericalneſs*, and every other *property* of that body *ceaſes* with it; ſo when an action *ceaſes*, then *guilt*, and every other *property* of that action *ceaſes* alſo. And therefore, when a man has once been *guilty* of *murder*, tho' it will be *for ever true* that he *has*, or *did* once contract the guilt of murder, that he *has been*, or *was* guilty of murder, and that he *has been*, or *was* a murderer; yet it will not be *for ever after true*, that he *is contracting* the guilt of murder, or that he *is a murderer*; becauſe when the *murderous action* ceaſed, then the *murder*, or the *non-conformity* of that action to rectitude ceaſed alſo. But then, tho' *guilt* is as *inſtantaneous* as the *action* it ſtands related to; yet the propriety and fitneſs of *puniſhing* the agent who has contracted it, *remains*, until he has *ſuffered* the puniſhment his crime deſerves, or has by his *repentance* diſcharged himſelf from thoſe vicious diſpoſitions, which were the ground and cauſe of his guilt; and when *either* of theſe take place, he then *ceaſes* to be the proper object of puniſhment; becauſe by the *former* a juſt reſentment is *fully ſatisfied*, and by the *latter* the *grounds* of that reſentment are *removed*, ſo that in either caſe the propriety and fitneſs of puniſhing ceaſes.

But then it may be urged, that I have uſed the term *innocence* in a ſenſe *different* from what it is uſed by the author I refer to, who intends by it *perfect virtue*, as is evident when we take into the account all that he has ſaid upon

upon the ſubject. To which it may be anſwered, *firſt*, That perfect virtue, perhaps, is a *ſtate* that none of our ſpecies have attained to, and if ſo, then perfect virtue does not come into the caſe. Man is ſo conſtituted, as that perfect virtue cannot *reaſonably* be expected from him, ſeeing it is more than *ten thouſand* to *one* that he will do amiſs, in ſome inſtances, through the infirmities and frailties of nature. Nevertheleſs, when a man retains *ſuch a rectitude of mind*, as not to contract any vicious diſpoſitions, and behaves properly through the general courſe of his life, and in thoſe inſtances in which he does amiſs through inattention and the weakneſs of nature, as ſoon as he comes to himſelf he is ſenſible of, and ſorry for his miſconduct, and makes his miſcarriage a reaſon to himſelf to be more watchful of his behaviour in time to come; I ſay, notwithſtanding ſuch a man *acts wrong*, in ſome inſtance; yet he behaves as well as the preſent conſtitution of things will admit, and as may reaſonably be expected that he ſhould; and therefore he will moſt certainly be approved of God. And, tho' ſuch a man does not attain to *perfect virtue*; yet he does not need *that repentance* which vicious men do, becauſe all the repentance he is capable of, and which his caſe requires, *attends upon*, and *tallies* with his *guilt*. And, if perfect virtue is not attainable by mankind, then, I think, it is out of the queſtion. But farther, if it be admitted that ſome *one* or *more* of our ſpecies have attained

to *perfect virtue*, or admitting it might be the caſe, or ſuppoſing it were, then it may be anſwered, *ſecondly*, That the ſhewing *mercy* to penitent offenders, is not treating penitence and perfect virtue *alike*, becauſe penitence only entitles to an *exemption from puniſhment*, whereas perfect virtue entitles to a *reward* ſuitable to the meaſure of that virtue which is to be rewarded; and this, ſurely, is very far from treating penitence and perfect virtue alike.

I am ſenſible it has been urged, that this is conſidering the penitent *abſtractedly* from his *crimes*; whereas he is to be conſidered in his complex character, *viz.* not barely as a *penitent*, but as a *penitent offender*; and that rectitude requires he ſhould be treated according to that *complex character*, which is the truth of his caſe. To which it may be anſwered, That this is *groundleſsly* urged, becauſe the *ideas* of penitence and guilt are *inſeparable* in the preſent caſe. The idea of *guilt* is evidently contained in the idea of *penitence*, as repentance neceſſarily ſuppoſes an *offence committed*, which is repented of; ſo that where there is repentance, there muſt have been guilt, and where there has not been guilt, there can be no repentance; that is, there can be no place for it, becauſe there is nothing to be repented of. Again, the idea of *guilt* is alſo contained in the idea of *mercy* or *forgiveneſs*, as forgiveneſs neceſſarily ſuppoſes an *offence committed*, which is forgiven; ſo that where there is mercy or forgiveneſs, there muſt have been guilt, and

where

where there has been no guilt, there can be no forgiveneſs; that is, there can be no place for it, becauſe there is nothing to be forgiven. And, indeed, the thing itſelf requires that *penitence* and *guilt* ſhould be conſidered as *connected*; becauſe it is this *complex character* only which is the *object* of *mercy*. For, could penitence be conſidered abſtractedly from guilt, (which nature does not admit) then *forgiveneſs* would be *excluded*, becauſe there is nothing in penitence to be forgiven: ſo that it is not penitence conſidered abſtractedly, but penitence connected with guilt, which renders a creature the object of mercy. In fine, the caſe in morals, I think, ſtands thus; *ſimple innocence* is a *mere negative*, it neither expoſes to puniſhment, nor entitles to a reward; *guilt* conſidered *abſtractedly* renders a perſon the object of *puniſhment*; guilt *connected* with penitence renders a perſon the object of *mercy*; *virtue* renders a perſon the object of, or worthy of *reward*; and to act agreeably, in the diſtribution of theſe, is to act *right*, or according to the *truth* of each one's caſe; or, in other words, according to *moral rectitude*. Thus, I think, I have fully cleared the character and conduct of the Deity from that great *diſtreſs* and *difficulty* it ſeemed to labour under.

And, as I have *removed*, or at leaſt have attempted to remove the forementioned *difficulty*; ſo I ſhall take the liberty to conſider what the *worthy* and *ingenious author* I refer to, has

offered

offered for that purpoſe. And, in order to make way for what the author has urged in the preſent caſe, he introduces *another caſe* as *ſimilar* to it. In the *former* God is conſidered as diſpenſing to his creatures *natural evils*; and in the *latter* as *diſcharging* them from ſuch evils. The *former* regards *thoſe evils* which befel, or at leaſt which are ſuppoſed to have befallen mankind, upon the miſbehaviour of our firſt parents in eating the forbidden fruit, namely, *mortality*, and a *depravation* of human nature upon the whole ſpecies. The *latter* not only regards a diſcharge from thoſe evils inflicted as above, but alſo a diſcharge from that *condemnation* mens ſins have expoſed them to.

With regard to the former, the author allows, that as *Adam*'s ſin was *perſonal*, ſo his poſterity, who were then not born, could not poſſibly be involved in the *guilt* of it; and conſequently could not be worthy of *correction* on that account. So that had Almighty God diſpenſed thoſe evils to mankind on account of *Adam*'s *tranſgreſſion*, this would be contrary to *rectitude*; becauſe it would be *afflicting* a multitude for the *offence* of one, which offence they were no way *guilty* of, nor *acceſſary* to. And therefore, to keep clear of this difficulty, the author conſiders the great evils which befel mankind upon *Adam*'s ſin to be *natural grievances*, that came upon *Adam*'s poſterity, not by way of *puniſhment* for his ſin, but only as *natural conſequences* thereof. Upon which I obſerve, that the evils beforementioned are *juſt*

the ſame, whether they be conſidered as puniſhments for *Adam*'s ſin, or only as natural conſequences thereof, they are equally the ſame *in themſelves*, and equally the ſame to thoſe who *bear them*, and, I imagine, that the *character* and *conduct* of the Deity are equally affected thereby. The *firſt* man, when he came out of his Maker's hand, is ſuppoſed by our author to be naturally *immortal*; and that he had no *inclination* or *propenſity* to ſin. But then, *Adam's body*, and alſo the *fruit* which grew upon the tree of knowledge, were *ſo conſtituted*, as that the *latter*, when it had paſſed into the *former*, naturally introduced ſo *great a change* in the human conſtitution, as that from an *immortal*, *Adam* became a *mortal creature*, and likewiſe all his numberleſs *poſterity*. And not only ſo, but the *effect* of this fruit was ſuch, when it had paſſed into *Adam's body*, as that it naturally introduced a *depravation* of the human nature; through which depravation all our ſpecies became *diſpoſed*, and were under a *ſtrong propenſity* to ſin. By this *bias* in the conſtitution, tho' man's agency was not deſtroyed; yet the caſe of every individual of our ſpecies became *exceeding hazardous*, in as much as it was great odds that *every one*, in ſome inſtances, would be betrayed into *ſin*, and conſequently into *future miſery* thereby. So that *in*, and *by* the diſpenſation of the forementioned *natural grievances*, (as our author calls them) mankind were, not only *cut off* from the perpetual enjoyment of the bleſſings

of

of this world, but alſo were *ſo expoſed* to the miſeries of another, as that there was ſcarce a poſſibility of eſcaping them. But then, were this the *truth* of the caſe, (which ſurely it is not) ſuch a conſtitution of things muſt be *greatly defective*, and *greatly contrary* to the divine rectitude. For, as man is by, and from his make and conſtitution an *accountable creature*; ſo rectitude requires that he ſhould be *equally* dealt with, and that he ſhould have *fair play* for his life; but if men are called into being under the forementioned difficulties and diſadvantages, having ſuch a *bias* in their conſtitutions as naturally and almoſt unavoidably leads them to *ſin*, and in conſequence thereof to *future miſery*, of which it may juſtly be queſtioned, whether *one* of our ſpecies has eſcaped, ſeeing, as St. *James* ſaith, that *in many things we offend all*; I ſay, if this be the caſe, which according to our author it is; then ſuch a conſtitution of things muſt be *greatly contrary to rectitude*; and then, as mankind are very *unfairly* and *unequally* dealt with, ſo the diſadvantages they are born under are *equally* injurious to them, and *equally* diſhonourable to God, whether they be conſidered as *penal upon*, or only as *conſequences* of *Adam*'s tranſgreſſion. And ſuppoſing thoſe evils to be *more than balanced* by the benefits that accrue to mankind in and through a *redeemer*; yet what is this more, or otherwiſe than *breaking* the head, and then giving a *plaiſter* to heal it; or the being greatly *cruel*, in order

order to make way for the exerciſe of *mercy*. But then, that mankind became *mortal*, and that human nature became *depraved*, conſequent upon *Adam*'s ſin, theſe doctrines are *contradicted* by all the obvious appearances of nature; and conſequently the divine conduct in the production of the preſent conſtitution of things, ſtands clear of what has been thus unjuſtly charged upon it.

Having thus conſidered what our author has offered as *introductory* to what he had to urge, in order to remove the forementioned difficulty, I now come to conſider what he *has urged*, for that purpoſe. The difficulty refered to ariſes from hence, *viz.* our author has obſerved, that were God to ſhew *mercy* to *penitent offenders*, whom he allows to be the *objects of mercy*, this would be treating penitence and innocence *alike*; which as they are *different* characters, that call for *different* treatment, ſo to treat them *alike* muſt be contrary to *rectitude*. To which I have added, that were God to *puniſh penitent offenders*, this would be treating penitence and impenitence *alike*; which as they are *different* characters, (*much more* different than penitence and innocence) that call for *different* treatment, ſo to treat them *alike* muſt be contrary to *rectitude* alſo. Here we ſee, that in the preſent caſe, the Deity ſeems to be ſurrounded with *difficulty* on every ſide; the *kind aſſiſtance* which our author has *offered* to help him out, I come now to conſider. The expedient which our author has found out for

removing the aforeſaid difficulty, is by introducing a *redeemer* into the caſe; tho', by the way, the term redeemer muſt be uſed in a very *remote*, *improper*, or *figurative ſenſe*; becauſe when that term is uſed *properly*, it is not applicable to the caſe before us, ſeeing the caſe in hand no way *tallies* with a *literal redemption*. But admitting the term, which in the preſent caſe is merely *nominal*, the queſtion will be, how is the forementioned difficulty removed by a redeemer? And the anſwer, in a few words, (without meddling with the *flouriſhes* and *decorations* of our author's argument) I think, is this, namely, that the redeemer has *done* and *ſuffered ſuch things*, as have *merited* greatly at the hands of God, which merit God has *rewarded* the redeemer for, in a way that terminates in the *good* both of the redeemed and the redeemer; in the *good* of the redeemed by their *ſins being pardoned*; and in the *good* of the redeemer by the *pleaſure* and *ſatisfaction* that ariſes to him from a *ſenſe* of penitent offenders being *forgiven*, and of *his* having *obtained* that forgiveneſs for them. This is the way in which God pardons penitent offenders, according to our author, which he thinks is agreeable with *rectitude*; and thus he thinks the forementioned difficulty is *removed*; tho', I think, a little attention to the ſubject will plainly ſhew the contrary, upon our author's principles.

Our author lays it down as a *fundamental principle* in morals, that every creature muſt

be

be dealt with acccording to his *true character*, whether that character be *ſimple* or *compounded*; and to act otherwiſe is contrary to *rectitude*. And ſeeing penitent offenders ſuſtain a double or complex character compounded of *guilt* and *penitence*, and innocence is a *ſimple uncompounded* character, this difference of courſe calls for *different* treatment; and therefore to treat penitence, (that is, penitence connected with guilt,) and innocence *alike*, muſt be contrary to *rectitude*, according to the fundamental principle before laid down. Upon which I obſerve, that if rectitude requires that *every creature* ſhould be treated according to his *true character*, and if the *having been guilty* is a part of the character of a penitent offender, as moſt certainly it is, and if *pardoning* the penitent is contrary to *rectitude* as our author maintains, becauſe it is treating penitence and innocence *alike*; then from hence it will unavoidably follow, that it will be *for ever* contrary to *rectitude* for God to *pardon* a guilty perſon, whether penitent, or impenitent; becauſe the *having been guilty* will *for ever* be a part of his character. For let whatever circumſtances take place; yet as thoſe circumſtances cannot poſſibly *alter* the guilty perſon's character, but *leave him* juſt as they found him in that reſpect, *viz.* a *guilty perſon*; ſo they cannot poſſibly *alter* the *divine conduct* with reſpect to him, ſuppoſing God to act agreeably with *rectitude*. It will be *for ever true*, that a perſon *has been guilty* of thoſe faults which

he has been guilty of, and this will *for ever be his true character*, or at leaſt a *part* of it; and therefore it will *always be unfit*, (let what will take place) for God to *pardon* him, becauſe that will be treating guilt (whether connected with penitence, or impenitence) and innocence *alike*, which is contrary to *rectitude*, upon the principles before laid down; ſo that the introducing a redeemer makes *no alteration* in the caſe. And therefore, admitting that the *merits* of a redeemer were a *thouſand fold greater* than they are, ſuppoſing ſuch a thing could be; as thoſe merits have no connection with, nor relation to the *guilt* of any foreign agent, nor is the *character* of any guilty perſon in the leaſt *altered* thereby; ſo he cannot poſſibly receive any *benefit* from them, becauſe rectitude requires that he ſhould be *dealt with*, not according to the merits and true character of *another*, but according to the truth and reality of his *own caſe*.

Beſides, the merits of a redeemer cannot poſſibly *alter the nature of things*, they cannot turn *wrong* into *right*, where the ſubject continues the ſame, which is the preſent caſe. And therefore, to ſuppoſe that God would *pardon* penitent offenders by way of *reward* for the *merits* of a redeemer, is the ſame as to ſuppoſe that God would *do evil* that *good might come of it*; that God would do what is *morally evil*, that *natural good* may accrue thereby, both to the redeemer, and the redeemed. To *pardon* penitent offenders is declared

clared to be contrary to *rectitude*, that is, it is *morally evil*; and if ſo, then we may be aſſured this is what God *will not do*, to anſwer *any*, even the *beſt* of purpoſes. For, tho' God will moſt certainly reward the merits of a *redeemer*, and of every other *perſon*; yet, ſurely, he will do it in a way that is perfectly *agreeable* with rectitude, and not in a way that is *contrary* thereto, which the *pardoning* penitent offenders is *profeſſed* and *declared* to be. And, tho' a *redeemer* cannot but *approve of*, and be *pleaſed with* the repentance and forgiveneſs of ſinners, this being the caſe of *every gracious mind*, there being *joy in heaven, joy in the preſence of the angels of God over one ſinner that repenteth*, and much more over *multitudes* that do ſo; yet, ſurely, *ſuch pleaſure* cannot, with any propriety, be called a *reward*, becauſe in fact it is not ſo. The pleaſure and ſatisfaction that ariſes to every good mind from a *ſenſe* of penitent offenders being forgiven, is moſt apparently the *effect* and *conſequence* of ſuch forgiveneſs, and not the *ground* and *reaſon* of it; and, the introducing the term *redeemer*, which is merely nominal, makes *no alteration* in the caſe. Nor is the redeemer's *merits rewarded* by God's *pardoning* penitent offenders; for if that were the caſe, then the *merits* of *one*, would be *rewarded* in the *perſons of others*, which our author does not admit, becauſe it is contrary to rectitude. However, to ſave appearances, the *pardoning* penitent offenders muſt be *called* rewarding the merits of a redeemer,

deemer, tho' ever ſo *improper*, and then all looks fair and well: like as in the forementioned caſe, the *great evils* that are ſuppoſed to befal mankind upon the tranſgreſſion of our firſt parents, if thoſe evils are conſidered as *afflictions* laid upon our ſpecies on account of *Adam's ſin*, this is not to be admitted, becauſe it is contrary to rectitude; but then, conjure thoſe evils into a *conſequence* of *Adam's tranſgreſſion* and all is right. From what I have obſerved, I think, it appears, that our author, inſtead of *removing* the forementioned difficulty, has rather *perplexed* and *diſtreſſed* the ſubject.

As to our author's *ſimilitude*, of an earthly monarch *pardoning* his rebellious *penitent* ſubjects, at the *requeſt*, and on account of the *merits* of the prince his ſon; this is *a covering too narrow to hide the nakedneſs* of his argument. For, either thoſe *penitent* rebels *were the proper objects* of the king's mercy and forgiveneſs *independent* of the interceſſion and merits of the prince, or they *were not*. If they *were*, then, the caſe is clear, that it was *fit* and *proper* for the king to forgive them *excluſive* of all other conſiderations; becauſe otherwiſe he *would not* act properly by them, nor as their caſe required. If they *were not* the proper objects of the king's mercy and forgiveneſs *independent* of the interceſſion and merits of the prince, then the caſe is as clear, that it would be *unfit* for the king to ſhew mercy to *them*, even tho' he was importuned to do it

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by a *ſon* who had *merited greatly* at his hands; becauſe to forgive them would be to act *improperly* by them, and otherwiſe than their caſe required. And were the king to act *improperly*, by ſhewing mercy to thoſe who were not the proper objects of mercy from *ſuch motives*, this would be an inſtance of *great weakneſs*; but then, to attribute *ſuch weakneſs* to *God* is moſt intolerable, (I am ſorry to ſay it, for the worthy author's ſake.) To *tack about* here, and ſay, that thoſe rebels were the *proper objects* of the king's mercy, is to *exclude* the interceſſion and merits of the prince out of the caſe; becauſe then it would be *right* and *fit* for the king to *pardon* thoſe *penitent* rebels, becauſe they are *penitent* rebels, *excluſive* of all other conſiderations. I will only add, that to *play* at *cups* and *balls* in *morals*, is of dangerous conſequence; as it tends to *baffle* and *miſlead*, not the *external ſenſes*, but the *intellectual* and *reaſoning faculties* of mankind. But to return.

I have before ſhewn what it is which renders a creature the *proper object* of divine vengeance; and alſo what it is which renders *ſuch a creature* the *proper object* of God's mercy; to which, I here add, that the being the proper object of mercy is, and muſt be the *only ground* or reaſon to the Deity for ſhewing mercy in any inſtance, becauſe were God to ſhew mercy upon *any other account*, or from any other ground than the creatures being the proper object of mercy, he would then act *improperly*,

perly, or contrary to rectitude, which cannot, or rather which will not be the caſe. All therefore that remains is to enquire *how*, or in *what ſenſe* the terms redeemer, and redemption are applicable to the caſe before us; and particularly what is to be underſtood by them when applied to the *Chriſtian redemption*. I have already obſerved, that in a literal redemption with reſpect to perſons, (if I may be allowed to expreſs myſelf thus) there muſt be a *literal ſlave* or a perſon in a ſtate of literal ſlavery to a literal maſter, and alſo a *literal price* or valuable conſideration paid by a *literal redeemer*, to that literal maſter, in order to purchaſe a *literal redemption* to that *literal captive*. So that when thoſe terms redemption, and redeemer are applied to the caſe before us, they cannot be taken in a *literal* ſenſe, but muſt of neceſſity be uſed in a *looſe*, *improper*, or *figurative* ſenſe. The caſe, I think, ſtands thus. As in a *literal* redemption, the perſon who is redeemed, is delivered from a *great evil*, *viz.* a ſtate of *ſlavery*, which *deliverance* is properly called *redemption*; ſo in the preſent caſe, the offender is alſo delivered from a *great evil*, *viz.* from that *condemnation* which by the juſt judgment of God he was bound over to, which *deliverance* may alſo *by a figure of ſpeech* be called redemption. And as in a *literal* redemption, he who *pays the price*, which is the *ground* of the captive's deliverance, is properly called the *ſlave's redeemer*; ſo in the preſent caſe, he who is *inſtrumental* in bring-

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ing a ſinner to that repentance and reformation of his evil affections and actions, which is the *ground* of God's mercy to him, may alſo *by a like figure of ſpeech* be called the ſinner's redeemer. This, I think, is the *utmoſt* that can be expreſſed by thoſe terms redeemer, and redemption, when applied to the caſe in hand. And,

As Jeſus Chriſt was ſent into the world on purpoſe to *ſeek* and to *ſave* that which was *loſt*, by calling upon, or otherwiſe engaging ſinners to repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance, and thereby to render themſelves the proper objects of *God's mercy*; ſo whoſoever are prevailed upon by *his means* to repent and turn to God as aforeſaid, and thereby eſcape the wrath to come, all ſuch perſons may, by a *figure of ſpeech*, be ſaid to be *redeemed*; and Jeſus Chriſt may, by a *like figure of ſpeech*, be ſaid to be their *redeemer*. This is all the redemption that the nature of the thing will admit; and this, in a few words, is the *ſum* and *ſubſtance* of the Chriſtian redemption. And, that this is the truth of the caſe, is moſt apparent from the hiſtory of Chriſt's life and miniſtry, in which, the end of Chriſt's coming, and the grounds of God's favour to men, and of his mercy to ſinners are moſt expreſſly and fully declared. It is the *ſetting forth* and *exemplifying of theſe* to which Chriſt's diſcourſes and parables are chiefly directed, and in which they generally terminate. For as Chriſt declared of, and from himſelf that he was come to ſeek and to ſave

that which was loſt; ſo he declared that *repentance* and *reformation* was the ground and foundation of God's mercy to wicked men, and that except they did repent, they would *all periſh*. So that he came to ſeek and to ſame men in *this way*, and by *this means*, *viz.* in prevailing upon them to repent and turn to God, and thereby to render themſelves the proper objects of God's mercy. This, I ſay, was the way in which Chriſt propoſed to be a Saviour to mankind; and indeed this was the only *poſſible way* in which he could do it. For, as men had by their evil deeds rendered themſelves *perſonally diſpleaſing* to God, and the proper objects of his reſentment; ſo of neceſſity Chriſt muſt, if he would be a Saviour to them, remove from them thoſe *evil diſpoſitions* which had been the cauſe of their miſcarriages, and the ground of God's diſpleaſure towards them; and he muſt produce in them ſuch *good diſpoſitions* as would render them perſonally pleaſing to God, and the proper objects of his mercy. I ſay, Chriſt muſt render men perſonally pleaſing to God, of which there was no other *poſſible way* but by bringing them to repentance and amendment of life: for, as to what Chriſt either did, or ſuffered, which might render him perſonally valuable, and perſonally pleaſing to God, that could not poſſibly make *any alteration* in the ſinner's caſe. Chriſt likewiſe declared, that the practice of *virtue* or *well-doing* was the ground of God's favour, and that the practice of *vice* or *evil-*

doing was the ground of God's diſpleaſure, and this, I think I may ſay, he was conſtant and uniform in. For, tho' Chriſt inſiſted on mens *believing* in him, and repreſented ſuch faith to be of the *utmoſt importance* to them; yet, it is plain, he did not intend by this to teach men, that *ſimple believing* was the ground of God's favour and mercy, but only that without ſuch faith, the *purpoſes of his miniſtry* would not be anſwered upon them; they would not *do* what he taught them, if they did not *believe* in him. This very point Chriſt hath fully explained at the concluſion of his moſt excellent ſermon on the mount, in which he aſſures us, that it is not he who cries, *Lord, Lord,* who *believes* in Chriſt, and profeſſes *diſcipleſhip* to him, that ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but only he that *does the will of God* who is in heaven. That he who hears, who believes Chriſt's ſayings and *doth them,* builds his houſe upon a *rock,* acts with *ſafety,* whereas he who hears, who believes Chriſt's ſayings and *doth them not,* ſuch a hearer, ſuch a believer builds his houſe upon the *ſand,* expoſes himſelf to the *utmoſt danger.* So that it is not *believing,* but *doing* which is the ground of God's favour and mercy; and it is doing in a man's *own perſon,* and not in the *perſon of another.* The ground or reaſon why the father received, embraced, and rejoiced over his prodigal ſon, who had waſted his ſubſtance in riotous living, (Chriſt informs us) was not becauſe he had been importuned to do it, not becauſe ſome other perſon had behaved well and *merited* greatly at his hand; but becauſe he, the

prodigal, was *perſonally changed*, and become a good man; this was the reaſon why the father received him, *&c.* It is *meet*, it is *fit and proper*, ſaid the father to the elder brother, that we ſhould make merry and be glad, for; or becauſe, this thy brother was *dead*, and *loſt* in *vice* and *wickedneſs*; but is *alive* and *found* again by *repentance* and *reformation*. This is what Chriſt's diſcourſes and parables chiefly point at, and in which they generally terminate, as I have already obſerved; and this I call Chriſtianity, or the *Chriſtian religion*, becauſe this is what *Chriſt* taught, who was the *founder* of that religion.

I have carefully read thoſe books called the *Four Goſpels*, in which books we have an account both of what Chriſt *did*, and *taught* in the exerciſe of his miniſtry; and through the whole, theſe plainly appear to me to have been the *great* and *main points* which he inculcated upon his hearers, which he had principally in view, and which he induſtriouſly purſued; namely, to prevail upon men to render themſelves *perſonally valuable*, and thereby *perſonally pleaſing* to God; by putting on that internal and unaffected piety, that plainneſs and ſimplicity, that uprightneſs and integrity, that humility, meekneſs and patience, that modeſty, temperance and ſobriety, that peace and quiet, that kindneſs, friendlineſs, love and benevolence which are the *ornament* and *perfection*, and alſo the *happineſs* of our natures, whether man be conſidered in his ſingle, or in *his ſocial capacity*; and this Chriſt repreſents

as the *only ground* of God's favour, and of that great recompence of reward which is laid up in heaven for thoſe that are worthy of it: and alſo to prevail upon *vicious* men to be *regenerated* and *born again*, to become *new creatures*; by putting away from them all vile affections, and every evil word and work, and by bringing forth the fruits of righteouſneſs; and this he repreſents as the *only ground* of God's mercy to ſinners, and as the *only way* by which they may eſcape the wrath to come. This, I ſay, is what Chriſt *principally* aimed at thro' the whole courſe of his miniſtry, as the hiſtories of his life do plainly ſhew; there being but *one ſentence*, or rather but *one ſingle word* throughout thoſe hiſtories which ſeem to look *any other way*, and from which *any other* concluſion may be drawn. *Matt.* xx. 28. *Mark* x. 45. *Even as the ſon of man came not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter, and to give his life a ranſom for many.* Here from the word *ranſom* (which, I think, is all that can be found through the whole hiſtory of Chriſt's life and miniſtry) a contrary concluſion may be drawn, *viz.* that the ground of God's mercy to ſinners is not their rendering themſelves the proper objects of mercy, but rather what Chriſt has *done* and *ſuffered* for their ſakes; he came to give his life a *ranſom* for many. But then, to put ſuch a ſenſe upon this word, which is *contrary* to all that Chriſt has ſaid upon the ſubject, and which cannot poſſibly be *true*, this, I think, is greatly *unreaſonable*, and not

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doing *juſtice* to our common Maſter: eſpecially, if it be conſidered that this term is often uſed in a *figurative* ſenſe in the books of the Old Teſtament. For example, As God by his judgments upon the *Egyptians* prevailed upon *Pharaoh* to let the people of *Iſrael* go; ſo by a figure of ſpeech he is ſaid to have redeemed or ranſomed them *. In like manner, as Chriſt ſpent his time, his ſtrength, his life, his all, (if I may ſo ſpeak) not chiefly to ſerve himſelf, but to prevail upon *men* to be virtuous and good, and upon ſinners to repent and turn to God, and thereby render themſelves the proper objects of God's *favour* and *mercy*; ſo he may, by a like figure of ſpeech, and with equal propriety, be ſaid to give his life a *ranſom* for them; and this, I think, is the utmoſt that can, with any propriety or truth, be infered from this word. And,

As this is *true Chriſtianity*, and the *true goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt*, at leaſt as far as Chriſtianity and the goſpel of Chriſt are concerned with the grounds of mens acceptance with God, and of ſinners obtaining the divine mercy; ſo it is in this, that the Chriſtian religion *excels* all other traditionary religions; *viz.* in that it ſeparates true religion from every thing that has been *annexed* to it, or *blended* with it. Chriſtianity lays the ax to the *root* of the tree, it cuts off every *excreſcence*, every *luxuriant branch*,

* Exod. vi. 6. xv. 13. Deut. vii. 8. ix. 26. xiii. 5. xv. 15. xxi. 8. xxiv. 18. 2 Sam. vii. 23. 1 Chron. xvii. 21. Nehem. i. x. Mic. vi. 4.

branch, every thing that is *ſupernumerary*; and reduces religion to its *native purity* and *ſimplicity*. Chriſtianity makes *perſonal* valuableneſs, and that only, the *ground* of mens acceptance with God; and a *perſonal* renovation of heart and life, the *only ground* of vicious mens obtaining the divine mercy. But then, by Chriſtianity, I mean only what *Chriſt himſelf* has ſet forth and declared in theſe reſpects, and not what his diſciples and followers may have ſaid touching theſe matters. If a diſpute ſhould ariſe concerning what is *true* Chriſtianity, what is the *true* goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, then, I think, as the hiſtory of Chriſt's miniſtry has been tranſmitted down to us; ſo the appeal muſt be made to *that hiſtory*, in order to obtain proper ſatisfaction; and not to the writings of his *diſciples* and *followers*, who were liable to *fall ſhort*, or to *go beyond* the deſign and intention of their Maſter, as I have already obſerved. The *immediate* diſciples and followers of Chriſt, even *after* the effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt on the day of pentecoſt, thought, or were of opinion, that the goſpel of Chriſt was to be preached to the *Jews only*; and that led them to confine their miniſtry to thoſe *Jews*: but in this they *erred* in *defect*, *viz.* in limiting and confining the kindneſs and goodneſs of God (held forth by the goſpel) to the *Jews*, which was deſigned to be extended to *all mankind*. Again, the *immediate* diſciples and followers of Chriſt, or ſome of them at leaſt, thought that circumciſion and the obſervation of the ceremonial

monial law of *Moſes* ought to have been impoſed upon, and to have been ſubmited to, by the *Gentile converts* to Chriſtianity: but then, in this they *erred* in *exceſs*; namely, in making, or rather in thinking Judaiſm to be a part of Chriſtianity, when it is not ſo; at leaſt it was not judged to be ſo by St. *Paul*, and a great party of Chriſtians with him. Now if the *apoſtles*, if the immediate *diſciples* and *followers* of Chriſt were liable to ſuch miſtakes as thoſe before-mention'd, even after they had received the *promiſe of the Father*, as it is evident they were, if the *hiſtory* of their *acts* is to be relied upon; then, ſurely, this ought to be a reaſon to us to *weigh* and *conſider well* what we receive from them; eſpecially if it appears to be *contrary* to what we have received from their *Maſter*, which is the preſent caſe. Beſides, ſuch caution, care and inſpection is what the apoſtles themſelves have recommended to us. Thus, 1 *Theſſ.* v. 21. *Prove all things*, all queſtions, all doctrines, let them come from what quarter ſoever; and then, upon ſuch trial, hold faſt that which appears to be true and good. 1 *John* iv. 1. *Believe not every ſpirit*, every prophet, every teacher; but try them all whether they be of God, or not; becauſe many falſe prophets or teachers are gone out, or ſhew forth in the world. By this advice we not only learn, that *all teachers* and their *doctrines* are to be *tried*, but alſo, that there is a *certain rule* by which we may judge whether ſuch doctrines are true,

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or falſe; and conſequently whether they are, or may be of God, or not; becauſe, without ſuch a rule, all trial comes to nought. So that, according to the above advice, we are not *blindly* to ſubmit to *any thing*, much leſs to *every thing* that may be impoſed upon us. And, as Chriſt has made a renovation of mind and life, and that only, the ground of God's mercy to vicious men, and has not made his own ſufferings and death a party in the caſe, (if I may ſo ſpeak) nor indeed does the nature of the thing admit that he ſhould; ſo, ſurely, the *authority* of the *apoſtles* cannot be a *ſufficient warrant* to us, to ſet aſide a doctrine which is moſt apparently *true* in itſelf, and which has been delivered to us by their *Maſter*.

The pardoning penitent offenders is a matter of *great importance*, in which the penitent is *greatly intereſted*; and therefore it cannot be a matter of *indifference* whether God pardons penitent offenders, or not. Now, if it cannot be a matter of indifference, then the caſe will be brought to this ſhort iſſue, *viz.* it is in the nature of the thing either *right* and *fit* that God ſhould pardon penitent offenders, or elſe it is *wrong* and *unfit* that he ſhould do it; I ſay, it muſt be one or the other of theſe, ſeeing *indifference* (which is the mean) is excluded out of the caſe. If it be the *former*, that is, if it be in the nature of the thing *right* and *fit* that God ſhould pardon penitent offenders, then he will moſt certainly do it; and he will do it for this reaſon, *viz.* becauſe it is *right*

hands of *wicked* and *blood-thirſty men*, who treated him with ſcorn and contempt, buffeted him, put a crown of thorns upon his head, and at laſt put him to death in a way the moſt *ſhameful* and *painful*. And, as Chriſt went through all this duty and ſuffering readily, willingly and chearfully, and with a view to promote both the preſent and future well being of mankind; ſo of neceſſity he muſt thereby render himſelf *highly approveable*, and *greatly rewardable* to the common Father of us all; from whom, no doubt, *Chriſt has*, and *will*, in due time, receive a *full* and *ample reward*. But then, as to mankind it is out of their power, (at preſent at leaſt) to *return the kindneſs*. I ſay, there can be no room for doubting, but that God has, and will amply reward the virtue or merits of Jeſus Chriſt; but then, there cannot be the like reaſon for concluding that God will *heap favours upon*, or *ſhew mercy* to *others* on account of *Chriſt's merits*; becauſe that would be acting contrary to the eternal rules of right and wrong, which require, that *where virtue* takes place, *there*, in the *ſame perſon*, *reward* ſhould take place alſo, and not in the perſon of another. God may, if he pleaſe, ſhew kindneſs to his creatures *independent* of *all merit*; but then, it would be the *goodneſs of God*, and not the *merits of another*, which would be the *ſole ground* of that kindneſs: whereas were God to ſhew kindneſs to one, by way of *return* for the virtue or merits of another; ſuch return would be very *improper*, as

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the reward would be placed on a *wrong object*; in which caſe, (the truth is) the *abſence* of virtue would be favoured, (if I may ſo ſpeak) whilſt *virtue itſelf* would go unrewarded. This being the true ſtate of the caſe, the grand queſtion ariſing from hence will be, whether the *cruelty* exerciſed on Jeſus Chriſt in his ſufferings and death be a juſt ground for *mercy*, or for *reſentment* in the Deity. In all other caſes, I dare ſay, it will be allowed, that ſuch a ſcene of action would be a juſt foundation for reſentment; and if ſo, then the queſtion will be, how comes *nature* to be reverſed in this? how comes that to be a juſt foundation for mercy here, which would be a juſt foundation for reſentment in all other caſes? To add the circumſtance of Chriſt's being the *ſon of God*, is ſo far from *helping*, that on the contrary it makes the caſe ſtill *worſe*, as that circumſtance makes the *grounds* of reſentment ſo much the *ſtronger*. However, if the *opinion* of Jeſus Chriſt be of any *weight*, he has declared himſelf plainly and fully upon this queſtion, *Mark* xii. 1—9, *And he began to ſpeak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard,—and let it out to huſbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the ſeaſon he ſent to the huſbandmen a ſervant, that he might receive from the huſbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and ſent him away empty.——Again, he ſent another, and him they killed, and many others, beating ſome, and killing ſome. Having yet*

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therefore one ſon, his well-beloved, he ſent him alſo laſt unto them, ſaying, they will reverence my ſon. But thoſe huſbandmen ſaid among themſelves, this is the heir, come, let us kill him, and the inheritance ſhall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and caſt him out of the vineyard. What ſhall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and deſtroy the huſbandmen; and will give the vineyard unto others. This parable, I think, is only applicable to *Jeſus Chriſt*, and to *thoſe men* who had been before ſent to the *Jews* to remind them of their duty, and to call them to repentance for the breach of God's laws, and who had met with ill uſage from thoſe *Jews* on that account; and likewiſe to the *Jewiſh nation.* In the application of this parable, Chriſt is ſo far from repreſenting his ſufferings to be the *ground* of *mercy* to the Deity in any reſpect, that he does not give the leaſt hint of it; but on the contrary, he repreſents his ſufferings and death as a *juſt ground* of *divine revenge. What ſhall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and deſtroy the huſbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.* I am ſenſible this is only applicable to thoſe who were ſome way or other *concerned in*, or *acceſſary* to Chriſt's ſufferings and death; but then, theſe are *all* that can poſſibly be *intereſted* in the caſe. As to the *reſt* of *mankind*, the ſufferings and death of Chriſt cannot poſſibly be a *ground* of divine *mercy*, nor *revenge* to them; becauſe they are not rendered the *proper objects* of either there-

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by. To ſuppoſe therefore, that the *vileneſs* and *wickedneſs* which the *Jews* and *Romans* were guilty of, in laying ſo heavy a burden of affliction on Jeſus Chriſt, as he underwent by his ſufferings and death; or that the *virtue* exerciſed by Jeſus Chriſt, in ſubmitting to, and patiently bearing that burden; I ſay, to ſuppoſe that either of theſe were a ground or reaſon to the Deity to ſhew mercy to *mankind*, is moſt wild and extravagant, and repugnant to the common ſenſe and reaſon of mankind. As to the *wickedneſs* exerciſed in that ſcene of action, that, moſt certainly, was a juſt foundation for *divine revenge*. And, as to the *virtue* exerciſed by Jeſus Chriſt, tho' this might render him highly worthy of recompence or reward; yet it could not poſſibly be a proper ground for God to ſhew *favour* or *mercy* to *mankind*, becauſe they were not rendered more or leſs the *proper objects* of either thereby. The doctrine of *transfering* virtue or merit from one to another, or of God's ſhewing kindneſs to one on account of the virtue or ſufferings of another, as it has been of long ſtanding in the Chriſtian church, (who probably took it from the *Jews*;) ſo, I preſume, it laid the foundation for this doctrine, *viz.* That works of *ſupererogation* take place in ſome Chriſtians; which doctrine has prevailed in the *church of Rome*, and has greatly promoted the *trade* thereof. This doctrine of works of ſupererogation taking place in ſome Chriſtians, has indeed been *juſtly exploded* by *Proteſtants*; tho' at the ſame time they have maintained that there was an *in-*

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finite redundancy of good works in Jeſus Chriſt; whereas, if we ſuppoſe an infinite redundancy of virtue or merit in *Chriſt* which was *tranſferable*, then where lies the abſurdity or impropriety of a redundancy of merit in *ſome* of his followers, that is equally transferable, tho' *much leſs* in quantity, in proportion to the meaſure of virtue they have attained to? If it be ſaid, that Chriſt's followers have done no more than was their duty, and therefore they have not had a *redundancy* of good works; then the ſame may be ſaid of Jeſus Chriſt; it *behoved him*, or it was his *duty* to do, and ſuffer as he did, in order to anſwer the purpoſes of his miniſtry, and the end of his coming, or of his being ſent into the world.

If it ſhould be ſaid, ſuppoſing the doctrine of *transfering merit* were *excluded* out of the caſe; yet, nevertheleſs, it was abſolutely neceſſary Chriſt ſhould *ſuffer* and *die*, that thereby God might vindicate and ſupport the *honour* of his laws, and likewiſe ſhew his great *diſlike* of *ſin*; becauſe otherwiſe the pardoning penitent offenders would expoſe God's laws to *contempt*, by countenancing men in the breach of them: Anſwer, That it was neceſſary Chriſt ſhould *ſuffer* and *die*, in order to anſwer the purpoſes of his *miniſtry*, may perhaps be true; but that it was neceſſary he ſhould ſuffer and die, to anſwer the *purpoſes aforeſaid*, that could not be the caſe; becauſe thoſe purpoſes could not poſſibly be *anſwered* thereby. The *honour* of God's laws could not be ſupported and vindicated by

the *open* and moſt *notorious breach of them*, which was the caſe in the crucifixion of Chriſt. Nor could God's diſlike of ſin poſſibly be ſhewn, by his *permitting* men to be *guilty* of the greateſt wickedneſs, in imbruing their hands in the blood of a perſon the moſt innocent and virtuous: I ſay, God's diſlike of ſin could not poſſibly be ſhewn, by his permitting or ſuffering ſuch *cruelty* and *barbarity* to take place, which was *all the part* the Deity bore in that ſcene of action; namely, he *permitted* or *ſuffered* it. Nor indeed does the pardoning penitent offenders in the leaſt *countenance* the breach of God's laws. For, tho' God pardons *penitent* offenders; yet he pardons *none but penitents*, and that ſhews God's *diſlike* of ſin, and the breach of his laws, to be *ſuch*, that no merit, no application or interceſſion made to him by another, is ſufficient to *atone* for the breach of them; that nothing but a thorough renovation of mind and life in the *ſinner himſelf*, will diſcharge him from that *puniſhment* which his *ſin*, through the juſt judgment of God, has bound him over to.

But then, it may be urged, that the *apoſtles* of Chriſt taught this doctrine, *viz.* That God was made placable or merciful to penitent ſinners by the *ſufferings* and *death* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, as their writings do plainly ſhew. Thus *Romans* v. 9, 10. *Much more then being now juſtified by his blood, we ſhall be ſaved from wrath through him. For, if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his ſon,*

&c. *Eph.* i. 7. *Col.* i. 14. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveneſs of ſins.* Eph. iv. 32. *Forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you.* Heb. ix. 12. *By his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.* 1 Pet. ii. 24. *Who his own ſelf bare our ſins in his own body on the tree,* &c. Chap. iii. 18. *For Chriſt alſo hath once ſuffered for ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God.* 1 John i. 7. *But if we walk in the light, even as he is in the light, we have fellowſhip one with another; and the blood of Jeſus Chriſt his ſon cleanſeth us from all ſin.* Rev. i. 5. *Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood,* &c. Chap. v. 9. *For thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood,* &c. To which I anſwer, that *theſe* and all other texts of *like import*, muſt of neceſſity be taken in a *figurative* ſenſe, in order to render them conſiſtent with truth, and with Chriſtianity.

If it ſhould be farther inſiſted on, that the apoſtles *did teach* the aforeſaid doctrine, in the *texts* refered to; for tho' their writings do abound with figures; yet the ſentences beforementioned, or ſome of them at leaſt, do not admit of any ſuch figurative ſenſe as is here ſuppoſed. As thus, *forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you.* Here the doctrine taught by the apoſtle is plainly and evidently this, *viz.* That it is upon *Chriſt's account*, and for *his ſake*, that God forgives penitent

nitent offenders; of which *no figure* can be found which will *deſtroy this ſenſe*, and at the ſame time leave the apoſtle's words conſiſtent with *common ſenſe*. To this I anſwer, That if the apoſtles did teach this doctrine, of which I do not take upon me, nor indeed am I able to ſhew the contrary; then in this, as they greatly departed from the truth, ſo they went greatly beyond the deſign and intention of their Maſter, by making that the ground of God's mercy to penitent offenders, which Chriſt hath not made ſo; and therefore this doctrine is no part of Chriſtianity.

If it ſhould be farther urged, that the apoſtles have not only taught the forementioned doctrine, (*viz.* That God was made placable or merciful to penitent ſinners by or through the ſufferings and death of Jeſus Chriſt;) but they have alſo given it the ſanction of miracles, as they wrought miracles in confirmation of their *miniſtry at large*, of which *this doctrine* is a part; ſo that were this doctrine *erroneous*, ſuch error would be rendered *invincible*, by the miraculous power which attended it: To this I anſwer, Whether the apoſtles taught the aforeſaid doctrine, or not; or whether this doctrine has had the ſanction of miracles, or not; is not very material in the preſent caſe; becauſe the *authority* of the *apoſtles*, and the *ſanction* of *miracles* united, cannot poſſibly *alter* the nature of things, cannot make a falſe propoſition *true*, cannot make the doctrine under conſideration to be either *true* in itſelf, or a

part of Chriſtianity, when in reality it is neither. And, as to miracles, that matter may perhaps be thought to be *cleared up*, and all difficulties *removed* by a late learned and ingenuous writer on the ſubject of miracles, who has obſerved, that when miracles are unconnected with doctrine, then they only prove themſelves; that is, they only prove that ſuch miracles were wrought; and this, I think, muſt be true, except it be that they may alſo be marks of kindneſs or reſentment, according to the good or evil which may be produced by them. Neither veracity nor infallibility have any neceſſary connection with, nor dependence upon power, nor power upon them; and therefore the power of working miracles cannot, of itſelf, be a proper teſt of truth in any caſe whatever. And, as it would be very inconcluſive to argue, that becauſe a man ſpeaks truth, therefore he has the power of working miracles: ſo it will be equally inconcluſive to argue, that becauſe a man has the power of working miracles, therefore he ſpeaks truth; the *latter* concluſion being equally as *unnatural* as the *former*. Whether a man ſpeaks truth in any inſtance, or whether he has the power of working miracles, muſt be proved by ſuch principles from which theſe concluſions do naturally and unavoidably follow, and not from one another, ſeeing they have no connection with, nor dependence upon each other. The author I refer to has alſo farther obſerved, that when miracles are connected with doctrines,

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then they are either miracles of truth, or miracles of a lie, according to the truth or falſeneſs of the doctrines or propoſitions they ſtand connected with. So that if the doctrine under conſideration, together with the other parts of the apoſtles miniſtry, were connected with the miracles that the apoſtles wrought; then, as thoſe miracles ſtand connected with ſome propoſitions or doctrines that are true, ſo in theſe inſtances they are miracles of *truth*; and as theſe very ſame miracles ſtand connected with the doctrine under conſideration, which is erroneous; ſo in this inſtance they are miracles of *error*, (or, according to our author, they are miracles of a lie;) which diſtinction and difference does not ariſe from the miraculous power exerciſed, but from the *different doctrines* which ſuch power ſtands connected with. And indeed our author ſeems to be much in the right, in the preſent caſe, becauſe the nature of the thing ſeems to require that all doctrines which are to be tried ought to be brought to their *proper teſt*, (at leaſt all doctrines of moral conſideration, in which mankind are intereſted, theſe ought to be tried by the *ſtandard* of *moral truth)* and not be tried by any *power* they may arbitrarily be *connected* with; I ſay arbitrarily connected, becauſe nature does not conſtitute any ſuch connection.

Beſides, as, (according to the author I refer to) miracles, when unconnected with doctrines, prove nothing but themſelves; ſo the miracles wrought by the apoſtles, which ſtand upon re-

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cord in their Acts, do not appear to be connected with any doctrines, and conſequently thoſe miracles only *prove themſelves*; and in this view of the caſe they are out of the queſtion. That the miracles wrought by the apoſtles were not connected with any doctrine, by this I mean, that they were not particularly *declared to be ſo* by thoſe who wrought them, they not having declared what particular doctrines they intended to connect thoſe miracles with, or whether they intended any ſuch connection at all; and therefore, the queſtion will be, What is it which conſtitutes a *connection* betwixt miracles and doctrines? ſeeing nature has not made any ſuch connection. This indeed is a matter of great importance in the preſent caſe; becauſe, till this point be fairly ſettled, we may perhaps only *ramble*, and not *reaſon concluſively* upon the ſubject. But then, this is what the author I refer to has not done, nor attempted to do; tho' in his view of the caſe it ſeems to have been *greatly wanted*, and the ſubject ſeemed to *require it* at his hand. And as to me, it is a taſk which I find myſelf unequal to; for when I look round the ſubject, difficulties croud in on every ſide. However, I here obſerve, that the connection betwixt miracles and doctrines may be made or conſtituted, or at leaſt may be ſuppoſed to be conſtituted ſeveral ways. As *firſt*, by a *particular* and *ſpecial declaration* of him who works the miracle, in which declaration is ſpecified the *particular* doctrines or propoſitions each mira-

cle is, or is to be connected with. Or *ſecondly*, by ſome *general declaration* made by him who works the miracle, expreſſed in theſe, or the like words, [The works that I do, bear witneſs of me.] Or *laſtly*, ſuch connection may be ſuppoſed to be conſtituted by the working of a miracle, and the promulgation of a doctrine by *one* and *the ſame perſon*, without any general or particular declaration made concerning it; in which caſe, the *miracle wrought* becomes, *of itſelf*, connected with *every doctrine promulged by the operator*, at leaſt, with all that are promulged *after* the operation. If the *firſt* of theſe ways be the caſe, that is, if miracles and doctrines become connected by a *particular declaration* of him who works the miracle, then the miracles wrought by the *apoſtles* are out of the preſent queſtion, they only prove themſelves, ſeeing they are *deſtitute* of any ſuch connection with doctrines as is here refered to, and at moſt were only miracles of kindneſs or of reſentment. And then, as the miracles wrought by *Moſes* in *Egypt* were only connected with this propoſition, *viz.* that *Moſes was ſent of God to* Pharaoh *to demand the people of* Iſrael's *freedom*, and were not connected with that body of judicial and ceremonial *laws*, commonly called the *diſpenſation of* Moſes; ſo that diſpenſation does not appear to have been any more connected with, and ſupported by *miracles*, than was the *diſpenſation of* Mahomet. And the miracles wrought in the *wilderneſs* do not appear to be any more, or any other

other than inſtances of *God's extraordinary preſence* with the children of *Iſrael*, until he had brought them to the promiſed land; and at moſt were miracles only of kindneſs or of reſentment. Again, if miracles become connected with doctrines by ſome *general declaration* made by him who works the miracle, expreſſed in theſe, or the like words, [The works that I do, bear witneſs of me;] then the miracles wrought by the *apoſtles* are likewiſe, in this view of the caſe, out of the preſent queſtion, as being *deſtitute* of any ſuch connection. The apoſtles wrought miracles upon *different* occaſions, as the objects of *pity* were preſented to their view, and the like; but then, it does not appear, that they connected thoſe miracles with the doctrines they taught, by any *general* or *particular* declaration concerning it. Or *laſtly*, if miracles and doctrines, *of themſelves*, become connected by their being wrought and promulged by *one* and *the ſame perſon*, without any general or particular declaration concerning ſuch connection; then, indeed, the miracles wrought by the *apoſtles* muſt have been connected with their doctrines. But then, as the doctrine under conſideration, *viz.* that God was made placable or merciful to penitent ſinners through the ſufferings and death of Jeſus Chriſt, is ſuppoſed to have been taught by the apoſtles, which doctrine I have before ſhewn to be erroneous and contrary to Chriſtianity; ſo all the miracles wrought by the apoſtles, which became connected

nected with this doctrine, were, in *this inſtance*, miracles of *error*. And this muſt have been the caſe whenever the apoſtles taught any thing that was *erroneous*, of which the doctrine before-mentioned, I think, was not the only inſtance. I ſay, in all *ſuch inſtances*, the miracles the apoſtles wrought muſt have been miracles of *error*; tho' in many *other inſtances* thoſe very miracles were miracles of *truth*.

If it ſhould be ſaid, admitting the ſuppoſition, that the *ſame miracle* may be both a miracle of *truth* and a miracle of a *lie*, (which indeed, I think, it may be, if miracles and doctrines become *connected* as aforeſaid, except the inveſting a man with the power of working miracles makes that man both *infallible* and *impeccable*, and thereby ſecures him for ever after from thinking, ſpeaking, and acting *wrong*, which ſurely is not the caſe, nor, I think, is it pretended to be;) I ſay, if it ſhould be ſaid, that the admitting the above ſuppoſition greatly *embarraſſes the ſubject*, and involves it in *ſuch confuſion* from which nothing can certainly be concluded: I anſwer, we muſt of neceſſity take things as they are, whether they *prove more*, or *leſs*; and not pretend to extract *that*, or *more* from them than is contained in them; ſeeing, according to the proverb, We can have no more of a *fox* than his *ſkin*. Miracles are inſtances or evidences of *ſuperior power*, and have a natural tendency to draw people about the *operator*, and to engage their *attention* to what he ſays; they may

likewiſe be marks of *kindneſs* or of *reſentment*, according to the purpoſes they are made to ſerve; all this, I think, is plain and indiſputable. But when the matter is carried farther, and miracles are conſidered as *connected* with *doctrines*, and thereby are made *vouchers* for thoſe doctrines, then *difficulty* and *diſtreſs* appears. For when once a man has wrought a miracle, *after that* it will be in his *power*, and at his *choice* to make it a miracle of *truth*, or a miracle of a *lie*, or a miracle of *both*; as it will be in his *power*, and at his *choice* to promulge *truth*, or *error*, or *both* after the working of ſuch miracle. And in this view of the caſe, miraculous power may perhaps be thought ſcarce fit to be truſted in *human hands*, as being of dangerous conſequence; ſeeing error, even *hurtful error*, when vouched for by *miracles*, would become almoſt *invincible* to thoſe people whoſe attention and diſcernment ſeldom goes farther than their *ſenſes*, of which people there are not a few. For, as he who works a miracle is not only liable to *err himſelf*, after the operation, but is alſo liable to make the miraculous power he has exerciſed, ſubſervient to *good* or *bad purpoſes* as he pleaſes; ſo were God to deſign and conſtitute ſuch miraculous power to be a *ſanction* to *every doctrine* which the operator ſhould promulge *after* the exerciſe of it, the divine conduct, in ſuch a caſe, would be moſt *hazardous*; and it would be running ſuch a *riſk* with regard to the ſafety and well-being of mankind, as a man of common pru-

dence would not chuſe to do in an affair of much leſs concern, except the neceſſity of the caſe required it. And if we form a judgment of men in *former times*, when miraculous power was exerciſed, from what appears to *take place now*, it renders the caſe ſtill more difficult; becauſe now, it plainly appears, that many of the greateſt pretenders to, and moſt zealous advocates for religion, faith, and orthodoxy, are ſcarce *truſt worthy*, where the *abuſe* of truſt will turn to their *worldly* advantage, as experience and fact every day ſhew. To ſay that God will effectually ſecure all thoſe with whom he entruſts miraculous power, for ever after from thinking, ſpeaking, and acting wrong, would be to aſſert againſt plain fact, if the hiſtorical account of things in the New Teſtament is to be relied upon; but this, I think, is not pretended, as I have already obſerved. That the *apoſtles* and *firſt converts* to Chriſtianity *erred in judgment*, even in matters of importance, after they were endowed with power from on high, and after they had wrought miracles by virtue of ſuch power, is left upon record; and that the apoſtles were liable to ſuch error, is, I think, farther evident from their writings, or at leaſt this appears to me to have been the caſe of St. *Paul*, who is repreſented to have wrought miracles in abundance: and, that the apoſtles were liable to *err in practice* or *act wrong* is as evident, if St. *Paul*'s authority is of weight, who declared, that he withſtood *Peter* to the face,

becauſe he *(viz. Peter)* was to be *blamed*, as having acted wrong, *Gal.* ii. 11. And St. *Paul ſuppoſed* of himſelf that he was liable to act wrong, even to his own deſtruction, 1 *Cor.* ix. 27. If therefore the inveſting a man, even an apoſtle, with the power of working miracles, did not *ſecure that man* from erring in his judgment, nor from promulging ſuch error; and if it did not *ſecure him* from erring in his practice, from impoſing upon others, as is evident it did not; and if miracles and doctrines become, *of themſelves*, connected as aforeſaid, ſo that one becomes a *voucher* to the other; then the ſubject appears to me to be in a *perplexed ſtate*; which perplexity ſeems to render *ſcepticiſm*, with reſpect to *miracles*, more *eligible* than otherwiſe it would be; as it naturally leads to this queſtion, *viz.* Whether the *difficulties* which attend *doubting* that any miracles were ever wrought, are leſs, or equal, or greater than thoſe *difficulties* which attend the *belief* of them. With regard to the former, the ſceptick has *one main difficulty* to encounter with, *viz.* the *hiſtorical evidence* upon which the truth of thoſe miraculous facts depends, that the believer gives his aſſent to, and by which, thoſe facts are ſuppoſed to be *well atteſted*; but then the *weight* of this kind of evidence, in ſome caſes, ſeems to depend upon the *favourable diſpoſition* of the believer, who is convicted upon ſuch evidence: ſo that *equal evidence* does not, in all caſes, produce the *ſame degree* of aſſent where the favourable diſpoſition is want-

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ing, as where it obtains. This ſeems to be the caſe with reſpect to *witches* and *apparitions*; the facts that relate to theſe, having been looked upon for many ages paſt to be *well atteſted*, like that of miracles, the hiſtorical evidence for the proof of the former not coming greatly behind, for number, clearneſs, and credit, the hiſtorical evidence for the proof of the latter; and yet now, *ſcepticiſm* with regard to *witches* and *apparitions*, is become *much leſs diſreputable*, and is *more eaſily admitted* than heretofore; and this has led our wiſe legiſlators to *cancel a ſevere edict* with regard to one of theſe, *viz.* that of witches. Whether the *weight* of that *hiſtorical evidence* which attends miracles is liable to ſuch *fluctuation* as in the caſes abovementioned, I do not take upon me to determine; all that I have to obſerve is this, *viz.* that the believer, upon the foregoing ſuppoſition, (*viz.* that miracles are connected with, and are made vouchers for every doctrine the operator ſhall promulge after the operation by a divine appointment,) has alſo difficulties to encounter with; which difficulties, as they are *ſtubborn*, and ſeemingly *inflexible*, ſo one follows upon another, as the clouds follow after the rain. Thus, in the *firſt* ages of Chriſtianity, when the gift of miracles was vouchſafed to the church; then *parties* and *diſputes* about religion abundantly prevailed; and that not only in the *ſecond* and *third centuries*, but alſo in the *firſt*, as the *writings* of the apoſtles do plainly ſhew. Upon which I obſerve, that in

those

thoſe times the power of working miracles muſt have been preſent with, and have been exerciſed by *all parties*, and thereby miracles muſt have been *connected with*, and have been promiſcuouſly *vouchers* for *truth* and *error* alike; or elſe that power muſt have been exerciſed only in *favour of truth*, and conſequently only by *thoſe parties* that maintained it. If the *former* of theſe was the caſe, then *great confuſion* muſt have followed; for as the power exerciſed, ſuch as giving ſight to the blind, health to the ſick, life to the dead, and the like, could not, *of itſelf*, ſhew whether it was *connected* with *truth* or *error*; ſo the *party* exerciſing ſuch power muſt have left the ſubject under the ſame *diſtreſs*; ſeeing it was exerciſed by *all parties*, and on *each ſide* of every controverted queſtion alike. If the *latter* was the caſe, that is, if miraculous power was exerciſed only in *favour* of *truth*, and conſequently only by *thoſe parties* that maintained it, then, the conſequence is clear, *viz.* that parties and controverſies muſt have *ceaſed*, and could not long have ſubſiſted among them; for as miracles would have been *connected* with *truth only*, ſo conſequently they would have determined every queſtion in favour of *orthodoxy*, by which means all parties and controverſies muſt have come to an end; this ſurely would have been the caſe. There are many parties and controverſies ſubſiſting among Chriſtians at *this time*, of which, I think, the pedobaptiſts and antipedobaptiſts are not to be conſidered

ſidered the leaſt; ſeeing much learning and reaſoning have been ſhewn, and many volumes have been written by *each party* in that controverſy. Now, ſuppoſing the gift of miracles was at this time reſtored to the church, and that the power of exerciſing it was preſent with *one* of theſe parties and not with the other, and conſequently that miracles were connected with, and thereby became vouchers for *one ſide* of this controverſy only, the queſtion would be, what will follow from hence? And the anſwer to this queſtion is moſt obvious: *viz.* that the *controverſy itſelf*, and likewiſe the *parties* founded upon it would *ceaſe* and come to an end; becauſe on which ſide ſoever miraculous power appeared, it would *determine* the queſtion in its *favour*; and the other party would be forced to *give out*, as not having wherewith to *oppoſe*. And if this would be the caſe *now*, which I think muſt be allowed; then, ſurely, it would have been the ſame in the *firſt ages* of the church, when miraculous power was preſent with it. And therefore, ſeeing parties and controverſies prevailed among Chriſtians, whilſt the power of working miracles is ſuppoſed to have been exerciſed by them, from hence it may ſeem to follow either, *firſt*, that the power of working miracles muſt have been exerciſed by *all parties*, and thereby miracles muſt have been connected with, and have been promiſcuouſly vouchers for *truth* and *error* alike, which introduces great confuſion, as I have already obſerved;

or elſe it may ſeem to follow, *ſecondly*, that no ſuch miraculous power was exerciſed *at all*; ſeeing otherwiſe parties and controverſies would have *ceaſed*, which yet it is plain they did not; the *latter* of which may perhaps, in this view of the caſe, ſeem at leaſt to have the appearance of *probability*.

Nevertheleſs, I think, it muſt be allowed, at leaſt it is readily allowed by me, that tho' there is no ſuch connection betwixt *power* and *truth*, as that one is a *neceſſary attendant* on the other; and tho' miracles cannot alter the nature of things, cannot make a falſe propoſition true: yet, I think, when it plainly appears that miraculous power is, or has been exerted, the exertion of ſuch power calls for our moſt ſerious attention and regard; and if any doctrine has been promulged by the operator that mankind are *intereſted in*, which doctrine is in itſelf *probable*, as being perfectly agreeable to our natural notions of things, then ſuch miraculous power at leaſt greatly *ſtrenghtens* or *heightens* that probability, as it miniſters juſt ground for preſuming that the *ſpring* of ſuch *ſuperior power* is the *ſpring* of *ſuperior knowledge* alſo, when both, to appearance at leaſt, are kindly held forth to anſwer the purpoſes of benevolence. But then, I think, we are not *blindly* to follow every thing that may be *recommended* by miraculous power; but on the contrary, I think, it is our *duty*, becauſe our *intereſt* is embarked in the caſe, to try *every ſpirit*, *every doctrine*, *every prophet*, *every* teacher;

teacher; to *prove all things*, and to *hold faſt that*, which upon *ſuch trial* appears to be *worthy* of the *common parent* of mankind. This is the ſum of the matter, as the caſe appears to me; tho' it may perhaps have a very different appearance to others.

Thus I have gone through what I propoſed, and have, I think, treated this ſubject, *viz.* redemption, with *plainneſs*, *fairneſs* and *freedom*. And tho' I have gone out of the *common road*; yet if I ſhould here have dealed forth *more truth* to my readers than they are uſually entertained with, on ſubjects of this nature, I preſume it will eaſily be excuſed.

FINIS.

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and

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